

In the Web of History

Old Russia and Soviet Union

Book One of *Historical Family Memoirs*

*With Unique Insight into Nikita Khrushchev's Politically Formative
Years as a Communist Politician and a Rising Party Leader*



Olga Gladky Verro

Edited by Oliver W. Kellogg

*What isn't remembered will be forgotten.
That which is not written, is not preserved, passed down
or remembered is the dust in the dustbin of History.*

—Dr. Robert Owens, *History Is the Story of Life*

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~OGVAM Books~

**In the Web of History: Old Russia and Soviet Union: With Unique Insight into
Nikita Khrushchev's Politically Formative Years as a Communist Politician and
a Rising Party Leader**

Book One of *Historical Family Memoirs*

By Olga Gladky Verro; Edited by Oliver W. Kellogg

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In the Web of History is composed from narrated, written, or otherwise recorded memoirs and autobiographical stories and photographs of Gladky/Berezhnoy families: Orest M. Gladky, Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky, Olga Gladky Verro, and Gladky and Berezhnoy cousins, as annotated in the book. All materials were contributed unconditionally to Olga Gladky Verro to be included in Gladky/Berezhnoy historical family memoirs being in the process of compilation at that time for publication and in any derivative literary work at Olga Gladky Verro's sole discretion. The first draft of Book One manuscript, with the title "Touch of History in Our Lives: Memoirs of Nikita S. Khrushchev's Teacher and Her Family," was Olga's present on her mother's 100th Birthday, February 23, 1995.

1. Book front cover Photo of Berezhnoy Family is a gift of Elena Z. Avakyan on Antonina G. Gladky's 100th Birthday.
2. Photo of Antonina G. Gladky by Howard A. Tillery, High Point, NC, February 1995.
- 3 Author Photo—Olga Gladky Verro Photo by Donita, High Point, NC.
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Contents

Dedication

Acknowledgments

In the Web of History

Olga Gladky Verro Author Memoirist

Note on Spelling of Russian Names

Prologue

In Whose Name?

The Black Raven

Part One: Life in Old Russia

The Origins of the Berezhnoy Family

The Ancestry of the Berezhnoy Family

How Danil and Anna Berezhnoy Lived

Gavryusha Learns a Trade

Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy

The Matchmaking

Golden Childhood

A Petition to the Tsar

The Contagious Disease Trachoma

My Little Sister Natasha

The Thunderstorms

My Parents Were Devoted Christians

The Easter Holidays

Christmas

Christmas Festivities

New Year's Eve and Epiphany

Our Parents Loved Us

Learning Right from Wrong

I Hated Freckles and Loved to be Funny
My Mother Was a Thrifty Housewife
Ties with Grandparents and Relatives
Kharkovsky Street
Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy
Learning to Be a Teacher
My Sister Tanya
Students in Kharkov
Starting Out in Life
The Ukrainian Folk Dance Hopak
The Origins of the Gladky Family
Makar Timofeyevich Gladky
Makar Timofeyevich's Marriage
Makar Timofeyevich Gladky's Sons
Mikhail Makarovich Gladky
Pavel Makarovich Gladky
The Sisters Nadyezhda and Maria Mikhnyevich
Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna Mikhnyevich
Mikhail Makarovich and Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna
The Family of Mikhail Makarovich and Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna
Childhood and Youth in Nikitovka
The Yurevich Family
Attending Gymnasium in Taganrog

Part Two: Revolution and Civil War

We Are the Masters
Medieval Execution
The Noble Hearts
White Army Volunteers
Nata
A Defeat in Crimea

Part Three: The Bolsheviki Seize Power

Bolsheviks in Feodosia
Nikandr Yakovlyevich Myedvyedyev
Home at Last!
My Native Home
The New Masters
A Tragic Refuge
The Family of Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy
Tatyana Gavriylovna Berezhnaya

Part Four: Life in the Socialist Soviet Union

Uncle Pyetr Returns from Hiding
My Cousin Lida
Polytekhnization
The Courtship and Marriage
I Was in Love
It's Time to Go!
The Town of Yusovka
A Rabfak Student Nikita Khrushchev
Khrushchev as a Political Figure at Rabfak

Part Five: Stalin's Dictatorship

Ukrainization of Schools
The Village School
Cross and Needle
Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya
Nikitovka's Last Gentleman
Easter in the Catacombs
Uncle Pavel
The Last Encounter
Vadim Kuzenko and His Parents
In the Hamlet of Snyezhnoye
My Childhood in the Hamlet of Snyezhnoye
Peasants' Plight

Meeting on the Farmstead
The Dispossessed
Children's Health Resort in Crimea
My Father Returns to Live with Us
Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria Outbreak
The Raging Snowstorm
Sharing the Apartment
Exploring New Places and Activities
Digging into My Father's Past
The Extraordinary Meeting
Hamlet Kisyelyevka
In the Waiting Room
On Winter Vacation
Knopsyk
My First Friendship
Kotyk and Volodya Are Growing Up
Return to My Hometown of Slavyansk
My Pre-teen Years in Slavyansk
Being a Part of the Big Berezhnoy Family
The Keynote Speaker at the Conference
My Second Vacation in Crimea
The Newspaper's Proofreader
The New Ten-Years-School in Slavyansk
Teenager in Soviet School
Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy
An Act of Despair
Igor Mikhailovich Gladky
True Friendship and First Love
A Fight for Our Garden
Teachers' Conference in Kiev
Becoming Conscious of My Political Views
The Last Year of School

Moscow Power Institute

Second Semester at the Power Institute

Part Six: Germany Invades the Soviet Union

Twenty-Second of June 1941

The War Comes Closer to Home

Three Days of Anarchy

The Germans Arrive in Slavyansk

Epilogue

Appendix

Documents with Translations

Reference to Russian Names

Glossary of Names

Bibliography

Books Published by Olga Gladky Verro, Editor

Books Published by Oga Gladky Verro, Author

Historical Family Memoirs Books

Upcoming Sequel Books of *Historical Family Memoirs*

Editor Website and Blog

Author Website and Blog

*I present our family memoirs as a contribution to the
history of our native country, as well as a gift to the
present and future generations of historians, history buffs,
and many readers who enjoy historical memoirs and
appreciate the authentic voice of real people from the past.
In historical family memoirs—history is alive!*

—Olga Gladky Verro, Author Memoirist

To My Dear Mother

who nurtured me with love and protected my childhood from my father's secret as branded "the enemy of the people" when he had to hide from the Soviet State secret police. Who made wise decisions to save our lives during tumultuous times. Who sacrificed her own safety to allow my father and me to escape from being deported to the Soviet gulag.

To My Dear Father

who taught me to read when I was three years old and to write when I was four. Who encouraged my curiosity and instilled love for discovery of wonders of the world. Who believed in my abilities and guided me into pursuit of knowledge and doing my best in any work I start. Who gently nurtured me to live according to the precepts of his Faith.

To My Beloved Husband

who saved me at War's end from being deported to and enslaved in the Soviet gulag and gave me the gift of life in freedom. Whose fifty years of love for me and for our children was a blessing for our family. And whose dedicated support and belief that our family memoirs should be written sustained me in keeping steady focus on my work.

To My Dearest Son and Daughter, My Granddaughters and My Great- Grandson

for whom these *Historical Family Memoirs* should provide knowledge of their origins in faraway lands and the legacy to their ancestors that, I hope, they would preserve and pass on to future generations.

In the Web of History

could not have been written without my mother's, Antonina G. Gladky, written and narrated memoirs; without my father's, Orest M. Gladky, autobiographical stories; and without what they remembered about the lives of their parents, grandparents, people and events in their own lives.

And most of all, without their encouragement to record all this rich material and combine it all with my own recollections in *Historical Family Memoirs*.

In the Web of History

could not have been completed without my husband's, Giulio Verro, wish to leave the history of our family for our children, grandchildren, and future generations of readers; and without his affection, unconditional dedication, and many years of help in this endeavor.

In the Web of History

could not have been ready for publication without my friend and companion during our widowhood years, Oliver W. Kellogg, without his belief in the historical value of these memoirs, without his invaluable editorial skills, his encouragement, support, and great patience in completing several rounds of editing.

In the Web of History

In the Web of History is an engaging odyssey of a family—one of millions—caught in the whirlwind of catastrophic historical events and wars sweeping across twentieth-century Russia and the Soviet Union. It brings to life the not-so-distant past—it documents how history, the Russian revolution, the Communist Party, the Bolsheviks' totalitarian dictatorial regime, and Stalin's bloody terror influenced and shaped the family's fate.

It is a rich source for memoir readers who value an authentic voice of real people sharing their thoughts, aspirations, and struggles to overcome adversities in their lives.

It is a storehouse for inquisitive readers who choose to immerse themselves in the world of historical memoirs to discover details of daily life, customs and traditions that have been lost with time and vanished from the memory of new generations.

And there is a rare bonus for history lovers, history buffs, and historians—the unique insight of Nikita Khrushchev's teacher into his politically formative years as a communist politician and a rising Party Leader.

In the Web of History is a treasure of up-close, intensely personal accounts of Russian and Soviet Union history as lived, documented, and remembered in detail by the Gladky family—whose name is Legion. The saga of the Gladky family—of the new intelligentsia—who, from the Russian Revolution, the savage bitterness of Civil War, the Bolshevik dictatorship, and Stalin's persecutions, became pawns of history.

In the Web of History begins with the introduction of the humble origins of Antonina and Orest's families and their peaceful life in the Southern province of Old Russia, Ukraine. The family odyssey begins at the turbulent times in their country—World War One, Revolution, and Civil War—when 16-year-old Orest enrolls as a volunteer in the White Army to defend the Motherland from the Reds.

After the victory of the Reds, Bolsheviks seized power and established the Soviet Union—the first socialist state. Antonina

and Orest, like all the people in the country, became pawns of the Communist Party and Bolshevik totalitarian regime. To keep its control over the population, the State used fear, terror, and persecutions of suspected enemies, among them White veterans who were disenfranchised and declared to be “enemies of the people.”

Antonina’s and Orest’s life became a struggle to survive not only the adversities imposed by the Soviet government on its people but also to prevent Orest from being caught by the secret police. To interrupt the inquiries into his White veteran past, they moved from place to place in their native Ukraine, teaching in remote villages and small hamlets where there was a shortage of teachers and the inquiries took a long time.

In the Web of History is the first book of a multi-volume work of *Historical Family Memoirs* where the readers are introduced to the beginning of a tumultuous odyssey of a family relentlessly hounded from place to place in their native Ukraine by the State watchdogs. The Gladkys: Orest—pursued by Bolshevik state police as an “enemy of the people” owing to his age 16 Civil War service in the White Army; Antonina, his teacher wife, who had Nikita Khrushchev as a student; their engineering-student daughter, Olga, who at the end of the family odyssey became an author memoirist.

Her saga-like memoirs—*Historical Family Memoirs* books—are a rich resource for a description of the culture and life of the late nineteenth and early-to-mid-twentieth centuries Russia—particularly the Ukraine—the Socialist Soviet Union, and World War Two and post-war Germany and Europe. The events, written and narrated as remembered by her mother and father, add an authentic voice to their stories that are personal in detail and historical in scope.

Historical Family Memoirs is a compelling narrative consistently fascinating, frequently riveting, that speaks with verifiable historical accuracy and evokes novel-like response in the reader. It is an odyssey of danger, fear, imprisonment, and escape; of hatred and love; oppression and deliverance; starvation and savagery; separation and reunion; constancy and betrayal. But also there is courage, tenderness, generosity and kindness—sometimes, even of the enemy. Above all, *Historical Family Memoirs* is a record of enduring human spirit that in the end prevails against all odds.

—*Oliver W. Kellogg, Editor and Publisher:*
The Baudette (MN) Region—The Guttenberg (IA) Press.

Olga Gladky Verro, Author Memoirist

Olga Gladky Verro is a Ukrainian native of the World War Two generation who came to the United States of America in 1959 as a Displaced Person with her Italian husband and their two children—none of them speaking English—and joined her parents, also DPs, who arrived here from England in 1958. As a quick learner of English (which became her sixth language) and a former engineering student of Moscow Power Institute (1940–1941), by 1966 she'd earned a baccalaureate and, subsequently, Master's and Doctoral degrees at the University of Connecticut (1977). And she gave her best to her new country by educating American children until her retirement.



Olga Gladky Verro, Author Memoirist

She and her parents came to the United States by way of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union and the place where they lived—Ukraine. It was in those times that they came under Soviet artillery fire and with her mother enabled the escape of her father from the Gestapo concentration camp hospital prison ward. Her father was in double jeopardy. As an escapee, he feared being captured by the Gestapo. And as an “enemy of the people,” he needed to flee from the advancing Red Army and from being captured by NKVD, who would send him to the gulag or maybe just shoot him. They found a ready-to-depart convoy train full of young people drafted for work in the German labor camps and boarded it.

Olga and her parents became forced laborers in Nazi Germany until the end of the War. At that time, she met a sweetheart, Giulio Verro, an Italian airman, who became a prisoner of war of the Germans when Italy quit the war. He saved Olga from the advancing Soviets, who sought to seize and send to gulags their subjects who were in Europe at the end of World War Two. Giulio registered Olga as his wife at the Polish Red Cross repatriating Italian prisoners of war to Italy, where they married. They immigrated with their two children to the United States where, after a long separation (1945–1959), they reunited with Olga’s parents.

Olga’s father, Orest M. Gladky, was officially declared by the Soviets as an “enemy of the people.” Why? In the Russian Civil War, which followed the 1918 Revolution, he was a barely sixteen-year-old volunteer in the White Army who fought the Red Army as an artilleryman in the last battles for Crimea. The Reds won and thereafter pursued White Army veterans.

Olga’s mother, Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky, was a teacher in the Ukraine, as was her father, and from 1922 to 1924, one of her students was a young Nikita Khrushchev, who later became a Soviet Premier; she had an encounter with him in 1935 and a contact in 1939. Her memoirs provide rare insight into his politically formative years as a communist politician, and her later contacts show how her famous student changed as he moved through his political career to power. Antonina lived to the ripe old age of 104 despite so many years of Soviet oppression, war, and German labor camps.

Olga’s father was a writer since 1945, and his short stories

were published in Russian immigrant newspapers and journals in England, New York, San Francisco, and Buenos Aires. In the late 1970s, as his health began to decline, he asked Olga to preserve his works for posterity, so the world would not forget those terrible years in his Motherland Russia. With the new opportunity opened for self-publishing, Olga fulfilled her father's wish, and Orest M. Gladky's work is available now in English and in Russian versions. **Voices from the Past: A Collection of Short Stories....: Russia/Soviet Union: 1917–1971** and *Golosa is proshlogo* tell the stories of the disastrous and bloody years of revolution, civil war, and Stalin's dictatorship and offer to the readers snapshots from the perilous life endured by the ordinary people in the socialist-communist Soviet Union. She plans to re-publish this book with the new title "Socialist Paradise."

Throughout her working years, Olga collected and recorded her mother's and father's memories about their families and their life in the Soviet Union and recorded her own recollections of growing up in the totalitarian socialist state and World War Two years.

She also recorded her husband's memories of his Italian family, his years in the Italian Air Force during World War Two, as a volunteer legionnaire in the Spanish Civil War, and as a prisoner of war in Germany. She also recorded his and her recollections of a struggle to remain together at the war's end, when the Soviets forcefully deported their subjects to gulags and prohibited them from marrying foreigners.

In her retirement years, Olga composed all this written and narrated material in a collection of *Historical Family Memoirs*¹ and is publishing the first two books: **In the Web of History: Old Russia and Soviet Union**—Book One of *Historical Family Memoirs*—and the abridged version **Nikita Khrushchev's Teacher: Antonina G. Gladky Remembers**.

—Oliver W. Kellogg, *English Editor*

1. See the list of *Historical Family Memoirs* Sequel Books in the Appendix.

Note on Spelling of Russian Names

Words are a mirror of their times. By looking at the areas in which the vocabulary of a language is expanding fastest in a given period, we can form a fairly accurate impression of the chief preoccupations of society at that time and the points at which the boundaries of human endeavour are being advanced.

—John Ayto, lexicographer (b. 1949.)
From Wordsmith, wsmith@wordsmith.org.

There are many ways to transliterate Russian into English. This book is about the life of a family in Russia and the Soviet Union, and there are names of people, places, government offices, and other text that the reader will encounter. To make it easier for the reader and to preserve pronunciation and recognizable readable form in English, I selected the most common English spelling variants for Russian names that most readers would easily recognize.



Prologue

*Things which should be remembered perish with time and
vanish from the memory of those who come after us.*

—Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror*

*History books are almost devoid of human details ... Our
pasts are lost so rapidly ... Almost all of the interesting
human details about how our ancestors really lived have
been washed away with time—gone forever.*

—Robert G. Voelker, “How to start a family history,”
Modern Maturity, Aug.–Sept. 1981



In Whose Name?

By Antonina G. Gladky and Orest M. Gladky

The winter of 1917 was mild and snowy in the Ukraine, the southern region of Russia. Far away on the western front, in deep trenches covered with snow, Russian soldiers defended their country from their enemy, the Germans. They sacrificed not only their flesh and blood but also their lives in Russia's name.¹

Those who were on the home front suffered along with them. The war was a heavy burden on the country and its people, but enduring it meant preserving the honor and the glory of Russia. Therefore, the inconveniences and hardships of wartime were accepted by the people as a duty and an inevitable adversity they had to bear. "At the front the soldiers suffer much more than we do here, standing in line for provisions." That was how many Russians felt at the time.

It was a calm winter evening. Delicate, fluffy snowflakes whirled slowly as they descended to the ground. They fell on the faces of passersby, on their eyebrows and eyelashes, covering their hats and babushkas with soft down. The snow emanated a radiance of an exceptional, mysterious tenderness that had been sent to earth from a faraway sky. Perhaps that radiance was even holy, but the people on the streets were indifferent to it. Their minds were absorbed with thoughts beyond ordinary, everyday events.

Suddenly the seeming tranquility of the evening was changed by the gusts of a sharp, biting wind. Snowflakes eddied rapidly in the powerful currents of air and blinded the eyes of the hurrying people. But the anxious townsfolk noticed neither snow nor wind. They were engrossed in the foreboding rumors that had already reached the province from the capital. They waited impatiently for paperboys to rush out of the local printing houses into the streets with hot-off-the-press newspapers. They anxiously expected to hear the boys' ringing voices shouting the latest news. Worried people ran toward them, hastily paid for a newspaper

and, without waiting for their change, hurried to an illuminated store window or to a streetlight under which they could read. They wanted to see with their own eyes the words they had just heard in the discordant chorus of naive boys as they proclaimed unexpected, striking news:

“Revolution in Petrograd!² Revolution in Petrograd!”

“The Tsar Has Abdicated!”

“Abdication of the Monarch!”

“Revolution in Russia!”

The piercing, troubling voices of the paperboys spread further and further down streets and alleys, reaching every home, disturbing and agitating an established way of life, frightening the inhabitants and overwhelming them with an awful feeling of uncertainty.

The people received the news in different ways. Those who felt comfortable with the established way of life were stricken with fear of an approaching catastrophe. Those who believed in the promises of the revolutionary slogans were ready to follow the Revolution. Others—the opportunists—kept quiet, waiting for the right moment to fulfill their frustrated ambitions. Some conceitedly believed themselves to be the saviors of the fatherland with new government... And some—the Knights of Honor—joined the ranks of those now marching to save Russia and to preserve law and order. Yes, the Tsar had abdicated, but, in whose name?

The war against Germany continued; however, the front line staggered. Influenced by the revolutionary infiltrators that spread tempting slogans—especially those that promised, “All land to the peasants!”—soldiers abandoned the battlefields and ran home to their villages, expecting the promised redistribution of land that had been seized from the landowners.

In the cities, towns and hamlets, meetings and endless rallies went on and on. Schools and clubs—their floors littered with cigarette butts, sunflower seed shells, and spittle—became hosts to multitudes of unknown orators, giving them a platform from which they made their speeches. Some of them were revolutionaries; some were social democrats; still others were socialists of every kind and shading; some were young cadets who believed in the promises of the revolutionary slogans; and some were ordinary criminals released now from the prisons by

the Revolution. Without end, one after another, using gestures when they couldn't find words to express themselves, the orators shouted themselves hoarse threatening reprisals and death to the "bourgeois," to the "fat capitalists," to the "exploiters of the working class," to government officials, to merchants, to White Army officers, to policemen, to the clergy, and to the landowners.

Violent mobs were already breaking shop windows and warehouse doors. Savagely, brutally, mob law began to reign on the streets. Anyone could spark the mob's fury by grabbing the first suspected "bourgeois," who was held guilty merely because he owned a house, or a store, or because he was a lawyer, or a judge, or a doctor, or a policeman.

Ominous, threatening voices resounded everywhere:

"Death to the dogs! They have drunk enough of our blood!"

"Those vile creatures deserve it!"

"Break, hit, steal everything! It is all ours now!"

A lone man on the street observed it all, listened with bewilderment and watchfully hurried home, not knowing which side he should be on. And he thought, "Haven't they made a mess of it? Who will put things right now?" And, before falling asleep, he pondered over the foreboding words of "The Internationale," a hymn borrowed from the French Revolution by the Communists:

"Arise ye workers from your slumbers...³

Servile masses arise, arise,

We'll change henceforth the old tradition

And spurn the dust to win the prize."

The army, demoralized by all the desertions, began to suffer defeat after defeat. The civil war spread like wildfire into all parts of Russia. The Reds fought for the Revolution, the Whites fought for Russia, and the Greens fought for an independent Ukraine. All these armies behaved as masters of the cities, towns, hamlets, and villages; they plundered the population, confiscated from the peasants grain and other foodstuff to feed their soldiers, and destroyed everything in their path.

The Reds mobilized the youth to increase the ranks of their battalions. The Whites accepted volunteers of all ages to replenish their shrinking forces. Petlyura's Greens attracted those who for years had secretly yearned for an independent Ukraine. The Red Guards and the White Army fought against each other, and the Greens fought both of them. Towns, hamlets and villages changed

hands many times. In these battles, brothers unknowingly killed one another, one dying while defending the Revolution, another while saving his Russia, and still a third dying for a free Ukraine.

Industry stood in ruins; fields stood unsowed. The railroads were nearly at a standstill. Famine and a typhus epidemic decimated the population. Amidst all these calamities, from the beginning of the Revolution and throughout the Civil War, people continued to do what they could in order to survive. Some were lucky to have jobs or skills that allowed them to provide to some degree for their families; some searched for food in the impoverished countryside; others engaged in the black market. Despite all, the majority of the population suffered from hunger and disease.

In the midst of the chaos, most of the schools remained open, due to the selfless labor of many teachers. But, little by little, they began closing down due to lack of funds, fuel and the general devastation of the country.

-
1. World War One with Germany.
 2. During World War One with Germany, Saint Petersburg was renamed from the German name Petersburg to the Russian name Petrograd (1914–1924); the Bolsheviks renamed it to Leningrad (1924–1991); after the fall of the Communist regime, it was renamed back to Saint Petersburg in 1991.
 3. “The Internationale” (1871), by Eugene Pottier.



The Black Raven

By Orest M. Gladky

Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna Mikhnyevich¹ was a Muscovite.² In her gray-blue eyes and kind smile always shined the joy of life. She lived by a deep faith in God and in Mother Russia. She guided herself by faith in the family and in school, already teaching a second generation of children. Jokingly, she would tell her adult former students that she probably would teach their grandchildren and to develop their minds and thirst to learn. Her faith came from deep in her soul, heart, and mind without turning her life into an extreme of self-denial and austerity. Within the family and in the company of good friends, one could hear very often the ringing peal of her laughter.

She loved the Russian olden times and held firmly to their time-honored customs and traditions. She perceived extraordinary beauty in that time gone by and was able to present its richness in a symphony of words in which one heard sincere love for mother country.

In a simple child's story, "Kolobok,"³ that she often told to her small son Igor, even the adults would escape reality. Her speech murmured as a happy stream, and one didn't know where one was, in the world of Kolobok of childhood fantasy or in the reality of a comfortable living room chair.

And in velvet tones, which flowed as the waves of the River Don, she would tell a Russian epic, *bylina* of "Illya Muromets." Then from the dead past would rise the ancient Russian heroes with the strength and glory of Holy Russia. That could be followed by the story of "Boris Godunov," or by "Poltava"—the same Russia in the rhymes of poet genius Pushkin—that in her marvelous narration would transform the listener to a participant in past-time deeds.

It was not by chance only that Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna was the reader of the text accompanying the magic-lantern shows for the pupils that were shown in those days before motion pictures.

Then the stationary figures appearing on the screen would come to life and the “three maidens sitting under the windows” suddenly would begin to spin swiftly, their smiles to breathe with life, their eyes to sparkle with maidenly eagerness, and almost could be heard the dear-to-heart Russian voice saying, “If I was the Tsarina...”

She knew more than anyone all the ancient ceremonies and folklore of good and bad omens. Sometimes, just before the New Year, she would align a dozen of cups with chopped onions and foretell, “June will be rainy, and July—dry; there will be good crops and harvests in good weather...” And it happened that way.

Life was simple but overflowing with the riches of heritage from the past. It was a good life! And she always raised and poured forth her gratitude to God for granting prosperity to her native land in her prayers.

During the difficult years of war for the honor of motherland and for the celebration of the orthodox faith, her face was overshadowed with indelible wrinkles. Somewhere, far away on the front, Russian fighting men were dying. Was it possible to be indifferent during those years, which weighed so heavily on the country? And in her fervent prayers she was not the only one who with eyes wet with tears appealed in prayers for granting victory to the soldiers of Russia...

But then came the year of 1917—incomprehensible, terrible, and ugly. It resurrected the year of 1905 from the darkness of Hell. Her wrinkles and gray hair tripled. Her rolling and ringing laughter could be heard no more. And there was not even a hint of her sweet smile.

Revolution! Revolution!

And in faraway Saint Petersburg, that by the will of the Tsar was renamed now as Petrograd, a cynical and sinister farce was playing out on the stage of history. Suddenly, a defender of the criminals, who called himself Lenin, emerged as head of the Russian State; he was as a jester in a funeral procession shouting disgusting profane, demeaning drivel.

Thus, did Russia stumble into the abyss...

At times at the dinner table, Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna would take a piece of bread, look at it sorrowfully, and say, “Now even the word ‘bread’ is not the same—without the letter ‘yat’ and

without the 'hard sign' letter.⁴ 'Yat' was the inside of bread, its soft part, and the 'hard sign' letter at the end was the crust... One would eat it and know that it is bread in your mouth and not the worthless chaff of revolution."

More gray hair, deeper wrinkles on her face, her heart bleeding from the terrible premonitions...

One day one of the local super-revolutionaries asked her casually, "What is the matter, Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna? Why have you become quiet? Where is your laughter full of life? Where is your joy for life?"

"Russia is on its death bed; one needs to cry and pray to God for salvation!"

"No, Russia is on the operating table."

"That's even worse. Father Krylov used to say in his fable: 'It is a misfortune when a shoemaker starts to bake the cakes and the pastry maker to repair the shoes...' You will kill Russia on your operating table!"

During Christmastime, as usual, the small apartment resounded with the strident voices of youth. From the other towns, students from gymnasiums, royal, commercial and technical schools, and various specialized courses, the sons and daughters, nephews, and nieces, friends and girlfriends would come home and gather together. A place was found for all—only the noise and the energy of youth was not to be contained within the white walls of the rooms and so to burst forth into gloriously frosty days and star-covered nights.

The Christmastime celebrations were over. The year of 1918 was nearing fast—and then, the thirty-first of December. It was the last day of the year 1917, the year that birthed the monstrous child that was destined to grow too evil to be christened.

Toward midnight the ring of youthful voices echoed in the rooms. They had opened wide the porch door and aroused the household:

"Mama!"

"Aunty!"

"Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna!"

"Let's do the fortune telling!"

"Let me be the first today," said Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna. "What will happen to Russia?"

On the upside-down dinner plate, a crumpled piece of paper

burns in the yellow flame. It emits smoke, becomes black, and transforms into a fragile mass of indefinite form. Dozens of eyes intensely seek to catch and identify the contours of its shadow from the candle light. Suddenly the contrast is clear, and contours on the wall appear as a burial mound, atop of which a black raven is sitting...

Sorrow engulfed the hearts of all present, and the fortune telling on the eve of 1918 went without the usual laughter, without secret expectations and joy, without the nebulous desires of love and youthful dreams...

"Russia is going to perish." With this painful thought, Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna left from this life to ask the Omnipotent in the next life to save her Mother Russia.

She left not without hope. She believed that the spirit of the Russian heroes would arise and that the courageous, epic heroes would awaken and enter the fight with the Fiend of Hell to raise once more that great Russia with her immense richness of her past.

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1. Mother of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky.
 2. Resident of Moscow.
 3. Russian folk story about many encounters of a curious rolling dough-ball, named Kolobok, with all kinds of animals and who at the end was swallowed by a cunning fox.
 4. The two letters that the new Soviet government had banished from the Russian alphabet as symbols of the old Church Slavic language. Both letters were a part of the old spelling of the word *khlyeb* (bread).



PART ONE

Life in Old Russia

Have your parents tell you about their own parents and what they can remember about their grandparents... All you have to do is make a record of the simple, everyday things and pass them on to posterity.

—Robert G. Voelker, “How to start a family history,”
Modern Maturity, Aug.–Sept. 1981



The Origins of the Berezhnoy Family

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

The origins of the Berezhnoy family can be traced to the village of Nikolskoye in the Nikolsky Rural District of the Isyumsky Provincial District that was then under the jurisdiction of the Kharkovsky Province. It was located in the southeastern part of Russia, which long ago was known as *Malorussia*¹ or *Okraina*² and later became known by its present name *Ukraina*, or the Ukraine. The village got its name from the family name of its first landowner, Nikolsky, who long ago had received this land along with a number of peasant serfs from the Tsar as a reward for his services to the Crown. This was the customary recompense in feudal Russia for many years until the Agrarian Reform of 1861 liberated the serfs.

During this period of serfdom, peasant serfs were attached to the lord of the manor who owned them, and, according to the existing law, could sell them and punish them at his own discretion. It was well known that in feudal Russia some despotic serf-owners mistreated their subjects, used harsh corporal punishment, and divided serfs' families by selling their members to other landlords located far from their native villages.

But the peasants in Nikolskoye had no such bad recollections about several generations of landlords in their village. They didn't remember that anyone was ever sold, and the original serfs' families remained in the village for many years; they didn't recall, either, that any of their landlords used corporal punishment or in any way mistreated their subjects. Also, there was no record of any mutinies in the history of the village.

It appears that for many years the landlords in Nikolskoye treated their serfs fairly and provided for their subjects according to the prevalent customs. Their interest was to have healthy, strong, and contented serfs to work on their land and to take care

of the manor. Then they could expect the serfs to perform their duties according to the existing rules. This way, the serf-owners preserved their status quo, to which they believed they were entitled, and the serfs accepted their status quo, to which they believed they were born. For several generations the wise landlords in Nikolskoye had maintained this equilibrium.

All the landlords in feudal Russia provided sustenance and living quarters for their serfs, but each landlord had his own system of taking care of his subjects. Nikolskoye was a prosperous village, and peasant serfs lived with their families in cottages on land owned by the lord of the manor. They depended on their owner for their basic provisions. They then had to supplement their family's needs by cultivating small vegetable and fruit gardens near their cottages and by keeping a few chickens in their sheds. And some, who were also skillful at the trades of carpentry, blacksmithing, or wheel and barrel making, exchanged their services with other peasants for whatever they needed. In general, bartering was a common way of getting needed products and services among peasant serfs.

Having heard³ what was happening to serfs owned by cruel and despotic landlords in some villages, Nikolskoye's peasant serfs considered themselves lucky and used to say, "We should be grateful to our good *barin*⁴ who feeds us and treats us fairly as we deserve to be treated."

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1. The Small Russia.
 2. The outer boundary of the country.
 3. As recounted by Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky, who heard it from her grandmother Anna Berezhnaya.
 4. This is how Russian peasants addressed their landlords.



The Ancestry of the Berezhnoy Family

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

The village of Nikolskoye was located in a valley¹ near a small river, a tributary of the River Torets.² The peasants' neat, clay-walled, whitewashed cottages peeped out like white handkerchiefs from the dense cherry trees that surrounded them. Thatched roofs resembled big straw hats sitting atop the white walls of the cottages that stood on high clay *zavalinkas*³ and small windows winked here and there reflecting the sun's rays. Fences made from interwoven branches looked like huge baskets scattered in picturesque shapes along the streets. These fences divided the vegetable and fruit gardens and courtyards from the dusty unpaved roads, where a horse pulling a slow, squeaky cart rarely disturbed barefoot children in plain linen shirts playing a simple game of trundling hoops.

On the southeastern edge of the village, the scattered peasant cottages ran down toward the riverbank, stopping on a small hill where the sun's rays bathed the multicolored carpet of melon fields. Farther down, near the river's shore, the waters of the river nourished flourishing vegetable gardens that belonged to the lord of the manor.

For many years several generations of one family of serfs lived in one of the cottages near the banks of the river. The original landowner had given their ancestor the surname "Berezhnoy,"⁴ which was appropriate since it meant "the river-shore-dweller." The Berezhnoys were not field serfs who tilled the soil. Rather, they were manor serfs responsible for the maintenance of the manor and the manor house of the *barin*.

Usually, the landlord selected as his manor serfs the keen-witted peasants who were masters of one or more trades, who were good laborers, and who were strong and healthy. Traditionally, the position of a manor serf was passed on from

father to son, if the son demonstrated that he would be good at that kind of work when he, as a boy, helped his father with the chores.

The ancestral names of the serf families were preserved by the peasants by word of mouth from one generation to another. It was known that in the last decades of the 1700s, Ivan⁴ Berezhnoy was the manor serf of landlord Nikolsky. Ivan had inherited from his father the surname Berezhnoy, the position of manor serf, and the right to live in his cottage. Later, Ivan's son Osyp followed in his father's footsteps. Osyp's son, Danil, began working as a young boy alongside his father for the *barin*.

Danil Berezhnoy⁵ married Anna, the daughter of another manor serf named David. They lived with Danil's parents and served at the manor. By his merit, Danil earned the right to inherit all the privileges of the manor serf after his father's death.

But Danil had a better destiny than his father, Osyp, did. He received his freedom while he was still young, shortly after his father's death. The freedom came about a year after his marriage to Anna, and soon after the birth of their first son, Stepan, who grew up a free man.

As a result of the Agrarian Reform of 1861, when serfdom in Russia was abolished by a decree issued by Tsar Alexander II, Danil received from his landlord ownership of the cottage, the same one he lived in as a manor serf, along with the adjoining courtyard and garden, and he continued to live there as a free peasant with his family.

Additionally, the village community, called Mir, received a portion of the landowner's land, which was then divided into strips for each family unit. Danil received a strip of land in the fields and began to till the soil for himself. For the use of the land, all free peasants had to pay the government a tollage, a tax levied in kind, consisting of a certain portion of their crop.

Now that the peasants had received their freedom and with it the land to cultivate, they also assumed the full responsibility of providing for their families, a new task that most peasants in Nikolskoye took in stride.

The soil in that part of Ukraine, called chernozem, or black earth, was naturally rich and produced a plentiful crop. On their allotted land, the peasants planted wheat, rye, sunflowers, and potatoes, which made them self-sufficient in their basic needs for

bread, potatoes and oil for their families. Each peasant family also planted some other kind of grain, such as rye, oats, corn, buckwheat, or millet. Those grains were also part of their food staples and provided feed for poultry and livestock. Some also planted hemp for weaving cloth. These products they bartered with one another, an old custom of the peasant serfs that continued for many years among the free peasants. Now that they were free, they also took their products to sell at the markets of the nearby towns of Isyum and Slavyansk.

All the peasants in the village cultivated, around their cottages, small vegetable gardens, as they had done before receiving their freedom. There they planted peas, beans, onions, garlic, dill, and parsley. Cherry and apple trees surrounding the cottages of Nikolskoye provided fruit for family consumption and for sale at the market.

Also, now that the landlord no longer had serfs, he leased out vegetable garden lots close to the river. Since it was not far from their cottage, Danil and Anna took the opportunity to lease a lot on the sunny side of the riverbank. There the soil was rich, and water from the river for watering their garden was close by. On the gently sloping hillside they planted melons, watermelons, and pumpkins. Further down, near the shore, they had a vegetable garden, where they grew a variety of vegetables: cabbage, cucumbers, carrots, and sweet peppers.

After the serfs became free peasants, the life in the village slowly underwent some changes. The Nikolsky Rural District had a small Office in the village and was in charge of government administrative business. Besides enforcing the government's laws, recruiting for military service, and maintaining order in the village, now it was also collecting taxes from the peasants.

The State religion was Christian—Russian Orthodox⁶—and the church continued to function as a repository of all local civil registries of births, christenings, marriages, and deaths. All family contracts were legalized—for the government and for the community—in the church after they were consecrated before God, by being blessed by the Batyushka,⁷ as the Parson was referred to.

The Orthodox Church remained the center of social, spiritual, and community life in the village: all the peasants attended Sunday services; all christenings and marriages were celebrated

there, and funeral services were performed there. The peasants also consulted both Batyushka and Matushka⁸ about such matters as what name to give their newborns, about the engagements of their daughters, or about any other matter of a personal nature.

The village church and the Parson were now in charge of the religious education of the peasant boys. They were taught to recite prayers as well as to learn the Old Church Slavonic alphabet, which would then enable them to practice rudimentary reading from the Bible and the New Testament. Attendance was not compulsory, and every father was free to decide whether or not his son should attend lessons and for how long he would send him there to learn.

However, not all changes that happened after the liberation of serfs produced the best results for everybody. After receiving their freedom and the strip of land, not all peasants in Nikolskoye prospered at the same pace. Some were not ambitious and were satisfied to provide only food for the family; some were just lazy and neglected their fields, resulting in bad crops; some got sick and couldn't take care of their land; some had big families with small children and couldn't produce enough to sell on the market. But the worst problem now was that the peasants had money to spend, and some of that money went into buying alcohol that before was not as easily accessible to serfs. Some spent all their money on vodka and *samogon*⁹ and had to sell their strip of land, becoming farmhands. Working for hire for the landlord and for the other peasants, they barely could provide for their families.

But Danil and Anna were ambitious; they worked hard and were among those peasants in Nikolskoye who were successful in their farming business. They didn't have a big family and many children to feed. But most important, Danil kept himself sober, although he liked to have a glass of vodka on Sundays and holidays.

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1. As remembered by Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky (portions heard from her father, Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy, and from her grandmother Anna Davidovna Berezhnaya).
 2. The River Torets is a tributary of the River Donets, which is a tributary of the River Don.

3. Flat, narrow mounds of earth along the outer walls of the cottage providing support for wooden columns sustaining the roof.
4. The names of the ancestors passed in the family by the word of mouth from one generation to another.
5. Grandfather of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky.
6. After the Christian Church Schism of 1054, the Orthodox Church didn't recognize the supreme authority of the Pope.
7. "Father," as commonly used to call a clergyman.
8. Parson's wife.
9. Moonshine.



How Danil and Anna Berezhnoy Lived

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

Now that they were free and worked for themselves and not for the landlord, Danil and Anna, like most other peasants in Nikolskoye, worked diligently from sunrise to sundown. Danil's family was growing.¹ In 1865, when their first son, Stepan, was about five years old, their second son, Gavriyl,² was born and was nicknamed Gavryusha. A few years later their daughter, Kateryna, was born. Danil's old mother now looked after their three little children, as did most grandmothers in peasant families. When in her old age the grandmother became sick and frail, Danil and Anna took their children with them into the fields.

Danil knew farming well and was handy with all the maintenance chores, which he'd learned when he was a manor serf, and Anna was a thrifty, hard-working woman. They were able to pay a tollage for the field strip to the government and a lease for a lot on the riverbank to the landowner, from whom they also leased a horse.

They used every piece of land for what it could grow best and had enough vegetables, grain, and sunflower oil for the family, as well as feed for the horse and their poultry. This included the winter reserves. From the sale of vegetables at the markets in the neighboring towns of Isyum and Slavyansk, they saved money for other expenses. Soon they had enough to pay for a new thatched roof on the cottage and then enough to build a new barn. They added more chickens, ducks, and geese that they also sold at the market and started raising pigs.

Anna took good care of her *khata*—that's what a peasant's cottage is called in Ukrainian. As did many peasant women in the villages, every summer Anna painted the inside and outside walls of the cottage with whitewash, to make it look neat and tidy. She regularly cleaned the clay floor inside the cottage as well as the

zavalinka outside by skillfully spreading with her hands a freshly made, soft clay mixture on the surfaces to make them level and even. Then she dipped her hands in a bucket of water and patiently smoothed the surfaces until they became neatly polished. In those days, the peasants considered a clean and tidy cottage a beautiful place to live.

The major feature inside Danil and Anna's *khata*—and in most Ukrainian peasant cottages—was a large, hollow, multi-purpose brick construction that divided it into two rooms and took up a lot of space. On the kitchen side, a brick stove was built against this wall with the chimney leading into it. The stove had a cast-iron top with two round holes that were covered by three sizes of circular covers. This allowed fitting various-sized pots into them to be heated directly over the flame for faster cooking. On one side of the stove, there was a built-in oven with a metal door.

Next to the stove, stretching all the way to the cottage's back wall, there was a big baking oven, called *pyech*, with its chimney incorporated into the hollow wall. It was heated with wood and was used primarily for baking bread.

In the other room, incorporated into the hollow brick wall, were two warm sleeping nooks. One place, called *na-pyechy*, or an over-the-oven nook, was located high over the baking oven and next to its chimney. It was a wide and roomy chamber with an opening so that one could climb up into it by stepping on a bench. It provided a large, warm place where all the children slept on a layer of soft hemp. For the elderly who had too hard a time climbing up to the over-the-oven nook, there was another warm place to sleep called a *lezhanka*, or a stove-couch. It was a low nook inserted into the hollow brick wall behind the kitchen stove and its chimney. In the second room there was also a large family bed, consisting of a low wooden platform upon which several people could sleep lying sideways or lengthways, facing all in one direction or in opposite directions.

In the fall, all the sleeping places were covered with a soft layer of hemp. The hemp was changed often, and when it was removed, a layer of straw was used in its place. During the long winters the used hemp was made into yarn and woven into linen cloth on a simple loom. Most of the peasants' clothing—shirts, breeches, skirts, and aprons, as well as their towels—were made from this homespun linen cloth. However, Anna managed to

purchase inexpensive cotton muslin with a small flower print for a blouse to wear to church on Sundays.

To cover themselves during the cold winter nights, each one used his winter coat, either a *kozhuch* made of sheepskin and worn woolly side in, or a quilted coat, both were also worn outdoors during the day. Later, when the family had some money to part with, a quilted blanket was purchased for the bed, and the loose straw was replaced by a straw mattress. The pillows were stuffed with either hemp or straw, because any feathers plucked from chickens or down plucked from geese was sold to make additional income for the family. Near the walls were several long, wide benches and a long trunk in which Anna kept linen towels and clean clothes. These were used for sleeping on during the hot summer nights.

Like all of their neighbors, Danil and Anna were not pretentious about their furniture, most of which had been passed down from father to son. They had only a few rustic functional pieces made from unfinished wood by the village carpenter. In the kitchen against the back wall stood a large, open cupboard where Anna kept pots and pans, kitchen utensils, and a few cups and bowls. She also stored on its shelves staples such as flower, grains, dry beans, dried peas, oil, and salt. Near the stove there was a small table where she prepared food and mixed bread dough for baking. In the kitchen stood also a low, round table, which Anna diligently scrubbed every week and where they had their meals, sitting on small, low benches. Above the table, in the corner, hung a small icon adorned with a linen towel, called a *rushnik*, and from the ceiling hung a little candleholder. Anna lit the candle only at dinnertime on Sundays and on holidays, as the candles were expensive.

Water was kept in a big wooden barrel standing near the outside entrance. Anna had to fetch water from a well that served many families. She hauled it in two buckets hung on the ends of a wooden yoke placed across her shoulders.

Usually the family ate the evening meal together when everyone had returned from work. There was only one individual utensil to use during the meal—a large, round, wooden spoon. There were no individual plates, bowls, knives, or forks. Anna would put a big, round loaf of dark, coarse, homemade bread in the center of the table and a long knife, and next to it a large bowl

full of steaming-hot borshch.³

When the family sat down to eat, nobody would start eating until Danil said thanks to God for their daily bread. Then, each person would cut a thick slice of bread from the loaf, take a bite out of it and then scoop borshch from the bowl with the wooden spoon that could hold more than one mouthful. To keep the liquid from spilling onto the table, each person would carefully accompany the spoon with a slice of bread and hold it under the chin while sipping liquid and eating vegetables until the spoon was empty.

When everyone was finished eating borshch, Anna would place either kasha—a porridge made of any kind of cooked grains, millet, buckwheat, wheat, or oats—or boiled potatoes on the table, and they would eat it with a piece of salted lard or with a condiment of coarsely chopped onions golden-fried in sunflower oil.

In the winter, when they didn't go to the fields, at midday they also had steaming-hot boiled potatoes with a piece of salted lard and sauerkraut, pickles, or pickled tomatoes. Or they had kasha served with a fried onion condiment; or later, when they had their own cow, kasha was served with milk and mashed pumpkin baked in the big oven. In the winter, when there was no fresh fruit or melons, Anna also baked large slices of sweet pumpkin in the oven. She roasted pumpkin and sunflower seeds, and everybody kept enough of them in their pockets to snack on at any time. Poultry and eggs were reserved for the big holiday dinners and for sale.

Since Danil and Anna left home before dawn, there was no time to cook breakfast; everybody hurriedly ate leftovers from the previous evening's meal. At midday in the spring, summer, and autumn, they ate in the fields where they worked, or in a hut in the middle of the melon field. The food was simple—a piece of coarse bread and a slice of lard brought from home with a cucumber, a tomato, or green onion picked from the garden. In season, they ate lots of melons, watermelons, cherries, and apples.

One of the most important, time-consuming chores for Anna, as for all peasant women, was preserving vegetables. This had to be done as soon as they were harvested. Each vegetable had to be preserved in its own special way and placed in an earth cellar dug deep into the ground and then covered with more earth.

For pickling in large wooden barrels, pounds and pounds of coarse-grained salt were purchased in town. Cucumbers were picked before they became yellow and full of mature seeds. These were carefully washed and placed in a barrel with fresh dill branches and cloves of garlic cut in half.

Green as well as red ripe tomatoes were pickled in separate barrels. A handful of garlic cloves were thrown between the layers of the green tomatoes, and only the red tomatoes had whole sweet red peppers placed here and there among them. Then the right amount of salt was mixed with warm water and poured into the barrels to cover up the cucumbers and tomatoes.

Cabbage and carrots for sauerkraut were coarsely cut with the big knife in even, thin slices and then placed into a large wooden trough, the same one that was used for laundry and bathing. When all the cabbage was cut, Anna would dampen the palms of her hands on a wet cloth and then place her hands on some salt in a deep bowl. Then she would scoop out a handful of cabbage and a few slices of carrots and rub them between her palms, making the salt adhere to the vegetables and then drop the mixture into a barrel. Bay leaves were sprinkled here and there. Divided by layers of cabbage several rings of sweet-and-sour apples, called Antonovka, were placed around the edge of the barrel—this made it easier to retrieve them. Water was not added when pickling cabbage, as it made enough of its own juice.

The pickled vegetables in the barrels were covered with a white linen cloth, over which was placed a loosely fitting wooden disk. On top of the disk, a carefully washed, heavy stone was placed. Each week the stone and the wooden disk were lifted, and white mold, which had formed during that time, was removed by collecting it in the cloth. The cloth, stone, and wooden disk were then washed thoroughly in a bucket of clean water and placed back in the barrel.

Potatoes were preserved in the cellar in wooden crates and were checked once each month in order to remove any sprouts that were beginning to grow. Spoiled ones were given to the pigs. Carrots were buried in a sandpit dug into the earthen floor; fresh cabbage and beets were carefully placed on wooden shelves built along the walls of the cellar.

Onions and garlic with their wilted leaves left on were dried in the shade. Then the dried leaves were woven into long braids, by

which they were hung on the kitchen walls. Ears of dry corn, the husks of which had also been similarly braided, were hung in the attic. Pumpkins and bags of sunflower seeds were preserved inside the cottage anywhere they would fit, under benches, under the bed, or in the corners.

At that time, peasants felt they were living well if they had their own piece of land to cultivate and to work by themselves and could meet the basic needs of their families. This common Ukrainian peasant saying demonstrates their simple contentment:

"Did you all have enough to eat?"

"Thank God!"

"Did you all have a warm place to stay?"

"Thank God!"

"Did you all have clothes to put on?"

"Thank God!"

"Are all in the family healthy?"

"Thank God!"

"What else one could wish for one's family?"

"Thank God!"

Like all peasants in that part of Russia, Danil and Anna spoke Ukrainian, but they also understood the Russian spoken by their *barin* and by their customers at the markets in the towns of Slavyansk and Isyum where they sold their produce.

When Danil was a young boy, as a son of the manor serf, he worked alongside his father at the landlord's manor. From the other manor serfs Danil quickly learned how to count well enough to keep track of his farming and household needs and the skills needed to keep his farming prosperous.

As the years went by, keen-witted Danil and Anna listened to their customers' requests for new kinds of produce. They planted some new vegetables that their sophisticated customers in the nearby towns were willing to pay good money for: summer squash, eggplants, hot red peppers, cauliflowers, green salad, and radishes. While Danil was in charge of the fieldwork, Anna took care of both vegetable gardens and melon-field, and they helped each other when needed.

Danil and Anna's hard work paid off, and by the time their son, Stepan, and his wife worked beside them, they had prospered. Later, they bought two horses and a cow of good breeding that produced enough milk to make cottage cheese, sour

cream, and butter for the family, as well as for sale at the market.

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1. As recounted by Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky, who heard it from her grandmother, Anna, and from her father, Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy.
 2. Father of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladky.
 3. Ukrainian vegetable soup made from potatoes, beans, carrots, beets, cabbage, tomatoes, and onions that were fried in sunflower oil and flavored with dill.



Gavryusha Learns a Trade

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

Danil and Anna's second son, Gavriyl, nicknamed Gavryusha, was a skinny boy with wavy, dark-brown hair and lively, inquisitive brown eyes.¹ Gavryusha showed absolutely no resemblance to his blond, broad-shouldered older brother, Stepan. Even as a young boy, Stepan was quick-witted as a good peasant and had the strength to work with his father in the fields. He knew how to handle the horses, when it was time to sow the fields, and when it was time to harvest the crops.

On the contrary, Gavryusha was of a very different nature; he liked to help at home with daily chores. He was very observant and curious, always asking for explanations regarding things he did not understand. For example, he wanted to know why, after rubbing the end of a match against the black side of a matchbox, the small ball at the end suddenly became a beautiful light. Nobody could explain this to him.

One day, he climbed into *na-pyechy*, or over-the-oven nook, where he slept at night and where nobody would disturb him. He sat on the soft, dry hemp padding, examined the matchbox from all sides, rolled the match between his fingers, rubbed it in the palm of his hand, then struck it resolutely against the rough side of the box and... Akh!

Wonder! The beautiful light flashed and illuminated the whole space. He moved the flame closer to the hemp and small, crackling flashes of light began to run all over the hemp. Then suddenly the crackling lights turned into flames.

Gavryusha got scared. He jumped down and ran to his mother, screaming, "I set fire to the hemp! I set fire to the hemp!"

"Where?! Where?!" asked his frightened mother.

"There—*na-pyechy*! There—*na-pyechy*!" He pointed the whole arm toward the house.

By the time they arrived with pails of water, the entire padding was on fire. They were lucky that the sides of the nook

were made of brick, and they were able to extinguish the fire before it could spread to the cottage walls, which were made of wood covered with a mixture of clay and straw.

After the fire his father asked him, "Why did you set the hemp on fire, Gavryusha?"

"I wanted to find out what fire was made of. But I couldn't..." replied Gavryusha with disappointment.

Danil concluded that, unlike his robust older son, Stepan, for whom farming was a natural choice for the future, his skinny younger son, Gavryusha, was not fit to work on the farm. He talked with his wife concerning Gavryusha's future, and they decided that he didn't have a peasant's nature. He even played differently, not like other children in the village. Although, at that time, he was only seven years old, he was always busy making all kinds of small things. He liked to carve wood to make figures, and he loved to make cages from cane; he also used pieces of leather to make adornments for horse harnesses. But he didn't care to go into the fields.

As a good father, Danil made up his mind to look in town for a reputable craftsman with whom he could place Gavryusha as an apprentice so he could learn a good trade.

One day, when their daughter, Kateryna, was sick, as happened often, Anna and Danil had to take her to the doctor in the nearby town of Slavyansk. They also took Gavryusha with them, just in case they found a master who would be willing to teach him a trade. In town, Danil visited a carpenter and a shoemaker. The carpenter told him that the boy was too young, but the shoemaker agreed to take him the next year when he would turn eight.

So, the next year Danil placed Gavryusha with the shoemaker to learn his trade. But Gavryusha had bad luck with the shoemaker, who was a drunkard. He used to send him to buy his vodka and, when he was drunk, he whacked and hit him for no reason; besides, he didn't teach him anything. Gavryusha was not used to this kind of treatment and soon ran away from his master, and, making more than a dozen miles on foot, returned home. He resolutely told his father, "I am not going back to the shoemaker!"

While Danil was searching for another tradesman in town, he talked with the village Parson to ask him to accept his son for prayer lessons. To start, the Parson read to the boys from the Book

of Psalms and from the Prayer Book, and the children learned to say the prayers by heart. After that, the children were taught the Old Church Slavonic alphabet because the Book of Psalms and the Prayer Book were both written in the Old Church Slavonic language. Gavryusha quickly learned the prayers, and it didn't take him long to recognize letters and put them together to pronounce written words. Although he attended the class for a very short time, it was enough to give him the basics of reading and to enable him to learn later to read and write Russian.

Soon his father placed Gavryusha in Slavyansk as a boy-apprentice with the hatter. There Gavryusha slept on the worktable and was responsible for such chores as cleaning the shop, carrying wood, and watching the stove. When he had spare time, he watched the older apprentices sewing caps and the Master cutting out fabric. But the Master did not allow him to try any tasks of the trade.

"You are too young," he told Gavryusha, "Wait a year or two. For now, just watch and learn."

But Gavryusha's hands were itching to start making something. So, without a word to anybody, he found a remnant and, in the evening, when nobody could see him, he cut out and sewed a cap for himself. The master didn't like his disobedience and complained to Danil about it. But Danil had good common sense and understood that his son was eager and ready to learn a trade. He removed him from the hatter and found him another tradesman.

This time, he placed Gavryusha with the best men's tailor in town, Master Gaydukov, who was very well known in Slavyansk. Danil told his son, "Be obedient, keep both eyes open, and learn all the tricks of the trade. Tailoring is a profitable trade—nobody goes around naked—all people need clothes. If you learn the trade well, you will be your own master, and you will earn enough to provide for yourself and your family."

And this time Gavryusha was in luck. Gaydukov was not only an excellent Master tailor, he was also a good teacher and a very kind man. He liked Gavryusha right away because he was obedient and wanted to know everything about the trade. The questions he asked made sense, and most of all, he liked him because he was diligent and patient in his work and tried to make everything exactly as the Master showed him.

Gavryusha very much liked staying with Master Gaydukov, not only because he treated him well and always had an answer to his questions, but especially because he always taught him new, more complicated tasks and challenged him to do perfect work.

As was customary in those days, most boy-apprentices lived in the shop, usually slept on the shop table or on the bench, and had their meals of whatever the Master or his wife gave them. In exchange for all of that and for being taught a trade, boy-apprentices had the duty of performing certain chores for the Master in the shop and for his wife in the household. Each master would establish what kind of chores he wanted done.

Gavryusha slept on the tailor's table with the pressing ham² serving as his pillow. He ate in the kitchen with the maid and the older apprentices. One of his chores was to get up early in the morning and start a charcoal burning in the big tailoring iron. In the winter, and during the still-cold weather in the fall and early spring, first he had to bring in wood from outside and start a fire in the shop stove. Then he would watch the stove during the day and add wood when needed. Also, in the morning, he had to bring a pail of water from the well to the kitchen and another to the shop. In the evening, he had to sweep the floor thoroughly and to collect all the pins and needles that had fallen there. Once a week, he had to wash the wooden floor in the shop.

During the day, he had to keep a supply of wet pressing cloths next to the pressing charcoal iron and sharpen the tailor's chalk used to draft patterns onto fabric. He also had to thread all the hand-sewing needles with basting and sewing threads and remember to wax the buttonhole and button-sewing thread. Then he had to stick all the threaded needles neatly to one side of a big pincushion and stick all the pins to the other side. After the Master had finished cutting out the garment pieces, he had to collect all the remnants of fabric and make neat small rolls of them to be given to the customers for any future repairs.

Of course, he also had to run errands for the Master, notifying customers that their garments were ready for a first or second fitting. He also had to run errands for the Master's wife, if she needed something right away from the store. And, he had to perform any other chore as the need arose. In between all his chores, he observed the work done by the apprentices and the

Master—there was no time allowed for playing with other children.

Master Gaydukov and his wife treated Gavryusha well, and they required that their servants and the apprentices treat him the same way. All the apprentices had enough to eat every day, and for holidays all the apprentices and servants had a special dinner.

Master Gaydukov required all the apprentices to be clean and neatly dressed, especially on Sundays and holidays, when they all went to church. Every week one of the servants washed the apprentices' clothes, but they had to iron them themselves after working in the tailor shop. For Christmas Gavryusha always received a present from his master: a pair of new shoes, or a pair of pants, a shirt, or a jacket, whatever he needed as he grew up.

Gavryusha stayed with Master Gaydukov for many years. When he was promoted to the status of apprentice, he was paid accordingly, and he continued to live with the Master. Along with the skills of the trade, he also learned from Master Gaydukov the Russian alphabet; the Master taught him to read and write all words pertaining to tailoring, as these were needed to make records of customers' orders. Gavryusha also learned enough arithmetic to be able take accurate customer's measurements, and not only write them down, but also calculate the fractions of inches needed for drafting the patterns to the customer's size.

In time, he learned the trade well and became Master Gaydukov's best senior apprentice. Now he knew how to tailor all kinds of outfits: suits, dress coats, tailcoats, half-seasonal and winter coats with quilted or fur lining; he even mastered the craft of cutting and sewing fur coats and fancy fur collars, as well as leather jackets and coats. And most important to his mastery of tailoring, he learned to calculate the fractions of measures and how to draft patterns for an entire garment directly onto the cloth with the precision of a skillful patternmaker, using only a yardstick and tailor's chalk. The Master was very happy with his apprentice's work and promoted him to master's assistant, increasing his wages accordingly.

Gavryusha grew into a handsome young man with wavy, dark-brown hair and a slender build. He was always well dressed, as he could afford to make his own clothes. Having daily contact with wealthy customers who came into the tailor shop, he acquired the good manners of a town dweller and learned to

speak Russian. On Sundays, in church, the young girls admired him, and Gavryusha thought it was time to think about marriage. He began to work harder, beyond his regular hours, whenever there was a need to finish some work for the customers; he saved some money and started to get acquainted with the girls.

While Gavryusha was learning his trade in town, his older brother Stepan got married. He remained to live with his parents together with his wife and five daughters, who were born one after another. Only the names of three of their daughters are known: one of them was Fevroniya, nicknamed Khavroshka, another was Alexandra, nicknamed Sasha, and the third was Domna, nicknamed Domochka.

Stepan took over farming in the fields before the time that he was called up for military service. Meanwhile, his parents continued to cultivate the vegetable garden plot and melon field. As an older son helping his parents with the cultivation of the land, and as breadwinner for his large family, Stepan was excused from military service. In time, Stepan's daughters were able to help with the household chores, to look after the cow, pigs, and poultry, and were handy in the fields during the busy harvest time.

Gavryusha's sister, Kateryna, once she married, went to live with her husband's family. They were very poor, because the men in her husband's family were drunkards and sold their strip of land. Therefore, they didn't cultivate the land for themselves but were farmhands who worked for hire for the *barin*, as a landlord was called, and for other peasants.

Kateryna was sickly all her life and couldn't do the work required in a peasant family. She had only one daughter, Khrystina, nicknamed Khrystya. Kateryna stayed in bed for long periods, and her daughter Khrystya, at a very early age had to start helping with household chores, garnering the hay and taking care of the few pigs and chickens they had. In her youth, Khrystya fell from a wagon while she was hauling hay. After her fall, she, too, was sick for a long time, and it left her barren. Danil and Anna helped their daughter, Kateryna, as much as they could, but because their son-in-law was a drunkard, they had to limit their help to foodstuff and to paying for doctors. If they gave her money, her husband spent it on *samogon*.³

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1. As recounted by Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky, who heard it from her father, Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy, and from her grandmother Anna Berezhnaya.
 2. Ham-shaped form, padded and stuffed with sawdust, used in tailoring to give shape to fronts of wool garments by pressing with hot iron, steam, and clapping with a wood clapper.
 3. Moonshine.



Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

In 1886, when Gavryusha turned twenty-one, he was called to undergo a physical examination by the military medical commission, which found him healthy and fit to serve in the military service. He was officially registered as Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and from his first day of military service was addressed by his military rank *snurovshchik* (rank for tailors and shoemakers) and last name, Berezhnoy. He was attached to the Fortieth Kolyvansky Infantry Regiment, where he was assigned to the military tailor's unit. His skills were immediately recognized, and after a short period of training, he began tailoring the officers' uniforms, greatcoats, and other special military outfits made of leather and fur.

In the military tailors' unit, Gavriyl Danilovich had everyday contact with the officers as they came in the shop for fittings. By observing them he refined his manners, and his Russian became enriched with more sophisticated words and polished speech patterns.

For four years Gavriyl Danilovich served in the Imperial Army and, in 1890, returned to Slavyansk as a First Class Senior Rank Noncombatant *snurovshchik* of the Fortieth Kolyvansky Infantry Regiment.

Immediately upon his return, he went to visit his former Master Gaydukov, who right away offered him a job as a master tailor. Being the best tailor in town, Gaydukov had too many customers to handle on his own. The town was growing, and new customers had to wait a long time for their orders to be completed. Gavriyl Danilovich was very grateful to his former Master for the offer. But he told him, "During my four years in the military service, I made up my mind, that when I return home, I would start to work for myself and look for a bride. I decided that it's time for me to get married and to settle down."

Next, Gavriyl Danilovich visited his father and mother in the

village of Nikolskoye. He told them that he hadn't accepted the offer of his former Master and explained the reason to them. "I have learned my trade well, saved some money, and served in the military. Now it's the time for me to have my own tailor shop, find a nice girl who will be a good housewife, get married, and start a family."

"Yes, yes," his father answered. "But you should find a town girl, not a peasant girl," he suggested. "You need a woman who knows how to keep house in the manner of townsfolk and who will be able to look after the tailor shop and be presentable to the customers."

Just at that time, Danil needed to drive into the neighboring town of Isyum to do business with the lumber merchant. Gavriyl Danilovich decided to accompany his father to see how many tailors there were in that town. He thought he might open his tailor shop there. Danil told his son, "I know for some time the lumber salesman, and he knows this town well. Maybe he can tell you about the local tailors."

The lumber salesman, Fyodor Iosifovich Grudzinsky, a short but lively Polish man, greeted Danil in a friendly manner.

"This is my son, Gavriyl Danilovich," Danil introduced his son by his full name, as was customary for a respectable town dweller. "He has just come home after serving four years in the army," he explained. "Perhaps you can give us some advice, Fyodor Iosifovich. You are very good with business matters, and you know this town so well."

Flattered, Fyodor Iosifovich replied, "I would be glad to help you."

"He is a very skillful master tailor," Danil praised his son with great pride, "and he is looking for a good place to open his own tailor shop. He wants to find a good wife and settle down."

Danil, Gavriyl Danilovich, and Fyodor Iosifovich talked about the tailoring business in Slavyansk and in Isyum. As Danil expected, Fyodor Iosifovich was indeed a keen-witted man, as any good salesman should be. He didn't recommend opening a tailor shop in Isyum. Instead, he advised Gavriyl Danilovich to open his shop in Slavyansk.

"Because," he said, "in Slavyansk many people know you." And he suggested, "Pay a visit to some of your old Master Gaydukov's customers, especially those you remember who liked

to bargain about the price. Offer them prices that are slightly lower than your old master's, and promise them that they will not have to wait as long for their orders with you as they now wait with Master Gaydukov. You will see that you will get work right away."

Gavriyl Danilovich liked Fyodor Iosifovich's advice, and he felt a great respect and trust for him instantly.

Fyodor Iosifovich immediately evaluated Gavriyl Danilovich from his point of view, with his own interests at heart. He saw that Gavriyl Danilovich was a good-looking young man, that he had a profitable and secure trade, that he had already served in the army, and that he was seriously looking for a good wife. "It is as God himself had sent him!" thought Fyodor Iosifovich, who had been searching for a good husband for his younger sister, Natalia, for some time. "It would be not a bad idea to arrange a matchmaking of Natalia to this young man." Fyodor Iosifovich decided that he would first have a word with Gavriyl Danilovich's father, Danil, to find out his opinion on the matter.

While Gavriyl Danilovich went to look over the tailoring businesses in town, Fyodor Iosifovich spoke to Danil about his idea. And it was mutually consented that Natalia could be an appropriate wife for Gavriyl Danilovich, if they liked each other.

The two men agreed on arranging the matchmaking for the couple.



The Matchmaking

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

Fyodor Iosifovich Grudzinsky, as a son, had many responsibilities to his family. When his father went blind and deaf due to old age, Fyodor had to take care of his parents and his younger sister, Natalia.

Before he went blind, Fyodor's father, Iosif Grudzinsky, had raised his family by operating a small mercantile store with a selection of all kinds of merchandise for the peasants in the small village. He settled in the village of Stepanovka near the town of Isyum after moving with his family from Poland, where they had lived in the city of Warsaw in the borough of Praha.

Although they spoke Russian quite well, Iosif and his wife continued to speak to each other mostly in Polish. However, all four of his children spoke only Russian.

Their oldest daughter, Yekatyerina, married very young to a Polish man by the name of Domogadsky and lived in Slavyansk, where he was employed as a salesman. Their oldest son, Gregory, had found a job as a coal miner and moved away from the family, got married, and already had two sons. At that time their youngest son, Fyodor, and their youngest daughter, Natalia, lived with them and helped in the shop. When Fyodor got married, he found employment as a salesman with the lumber merchant in Isyum and moved there with his wife, Lyuba. They had only two children, a daughter, Yekatyerina, named after his sister, and nicknamed Katya, and a son, Iosif.

When his father went blind, Fyodor brought his parents to live with him and his wife in Isyum. He placed his sister Natalia as a housemaid with the family of the same lumber merchant for whom he was working. Although Natalia had a decent job looking after the children and was well treated by the family, her brother, Fyodor, still felt responsible for his sister. When Fyodor Iosifovich met Gavriyl Danilovich and evaluated him as an eligible young man, he decided that this match was the perfect

opportunity for his sister Natalia to get married, have her own family, and raise her own children. After he spoke about it to Gavriyl Danilovich's father, Danil, they agreed to arrange matchmaking for the couple sometime soon at the home of Natalia's sister, who lived in Slavyansk.

Their introduction took place during the Christmas holidays, when Natalia came to visit her sister Yekatyerina for a few days. Her husband, Domogadsky, as a salesman, had a chance to get acquainted with Gavriyl Danilovich before the holidays and to form a positive opinion about him as a potential brother-in-law. Then, during the Christmas holidays, he invited him one evening to visit at his home and on that occasion introduced him to his sister-in-law, Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya.

It was not hard for Natalia Iosifovna to win the heart of Gavriyl Danilovich. She was a pleasant young woman of medium height, slender, fresh and neat, having donned her best holiday dress. Her straight, light-brown hair was softly combed back and plaited in a braid that was rolled into a bun and secured with hairpins low on the back of her head. Her high forehead was a prominent feature of a fair-skinned, smoothly rounded face. Narrow eyebrows softly outlined her green-flecked gray eyes. She held her head at a slightly upward tilt, which made her small nose, chin, and narrow, gently compressed lips more noticeable. She had gentle manners and was soft-spoken.

Natalia Iosifovna had heard all about Gavriyl Danilovich's positive traits from her brother and from her brother-in-law, Domogadsky. Slavyansk was a small provincial town where most of the inhabitants knew each other. And, although Gavriyl Danilovich was not wealthy, it was well known that he was a master of his trade; that he lived within his means; that he attended church every Sunday; and that he didn't have any vices. Therefore, he was considered a good marriage prospect for Natalia.

During the four years that he served in the army, Gavriyl Danilovich had matured considerably. A full head of wavy dark-brown hair, mustache, and neatly trimmed shovel-shaped beard framed his tanned face. His straight nose divided his face in half from his large forehead down to his mustache, and his thick, dark eyebrows made his brown eyes look bigger. His new well-fitting suit, which he made for himself before coming home from the

army, made him look like a picture out of the latest fashion journal. Living in town from a young age, he had learned the manners of a town dweller. And, during his years in the service when he tailored for the officers, he had observed and learned from them a gentleman's manners, refined words and expressions.

Both Danil and Natalia were ready for marriage. Therefore, after a short courtship, they decided not to wait long to marry. The wedding was in Isyum, without fanfare, but everything was done according to all Russian Orthodox Church rituals, as both Gavriyl Danilovich and Natalia Iosifovna were devoted Christians. The newlyweds settled down in Slavyansk in Gavriyl Danilovich's old neighborhood, on Kharkovsky Street, where he rented a small two-bedroom house not far from his old master's home.

He bought a second-hand Singer treadle sewing machine and a large table that he put in the kitchen. On the table he placed a brand-new charcoal iron, a pressing pad, a few pressing cloths, and a yardstick. He already owned a large pincushion and a pair of big tailoring scissors that he had used when he worked for Master Gaydukov. He bought several spools of thread in basic colors, pins and needles, chalk, pencils, and a small notebook in which to write down his customers' measurements. Around his neck he hung, for luck, his old tape measure—even though he could afford to buy a new one. And, voilà, he was in the tailoring business!

Gavriyl Danilovich followed his brother-in-law's advice about how to get his first customers and kept his prices slightly lower than his former master's. Gaydukov gave him some work too, when he had many rush orders on his hands. Therefore, right from the start, Gavriyl Danilovich could well provide for his wife, and soon bought the furniture and things they needed to start a household.

Beginning with their first year of marriage, they were blessed with children. Almost every year thereafter, Natalia had a child. In 1892, their first son, Vasily, was born. Sadly, he died of diphtheria when he was in the second preparatory class. In 1893, their second son, Nikolay, was born, and they called him Kolya for short, as was common in Russian for this name. The year after, in 1894, their oldest daughter, Tatyana, was born, and they called

her Tanya for short.

The family was growing, and so was Gavriyl Danilovich's business. He took on several apprentices to help him and began to save money to buy a house. He bought it just in time to celebrate both the housewarming and the birth of his second daughter, Antonina, who was born on February 23, 1895. As was usual for this name, they called her Tonya for short.

The house was on Kharkovsky Street, not far from where they had lived before. It had five rooms, and Gavriyl Danilovich could finally have a separate room for his tailor shop.

In 1896, their third daughter, Anna, was born, and they nicknamed her Nyusya. In 1897, their third son, Alexander, was born, and they called him, as was customary for that name, Shura. The next year, in 1898, their fourth son, Ivan, was born, and was nicknamed Vanya. In 1899, their fourth daughter, Olga, was born, and she was called Olya for short. After that, for several years they did not have any more children, not until Gavriyl Danilovich returned from the war against Japan in 1905. Then, their fifth daughter, Natalia, was born, and she was called Natasha, for short. She was sick from birth and died the same year. In 1912, their last child, the fifth and youngest son, Pyetr, was born, and they called him, Pyetya.

With all those children Natalia Iosifovna needed help, and they hired first one servant and later another. One took care of the children, and the other did general housework and helped Natalia Iosifovna in the kitchen.

Meanwhile, Gavriyl Danilovich was building up his clientele very quickly and needed help in the tailor shop. He took on more apprentices to help him; soon, he hired a senior apprentice. Still, he had to work late on some days to finish customers' orders, especially before the holidays.

Gavriyl Danilovich and Natalia Iosifovna didn't have much time for leisure—they were always busy. He took care of the tailor shop business by attending to customers and tailoring their outfits; she took care of the family matters by running the household smoothly and looking after their children. He was a good breadwinner, and she was a thrifty housewife. They were not rich, but their large family was well provided for and taken care of. They were content with their life, one that was common in those days for a lower middle-class family in a small provincial

town in Russia.



Golden Childhood

By Antonina G. Gladky

I find a festive occasion in the midst of humdrum life
To knit my verses, like laces, from the memory's yarn.
Longing for the past leads me into a melancholy mood.
Like a streak of lightning flashed by my golden childhood
And disappeared in stormy clouds of time past.
A swarm of memories is whirling in my meditating mind
And I remember that as small children we, myself and Nyusya,
My fair-haired younger sister, slept together on one bed.
And, in the summer, when she was five and I was six,
We chased each other in the garden playing hide-and-seek,
Or catching playful butterflies fluttering around us;
Or lying on the garden grass as we looked up into blue sky
And watched a lonely fluffy cloudlet drifting by.
It made us feel like we were floating together alongside it.
Suddenly, the white cloudlet broke up, dissolved and
disappeared.
It seemed like it was playing our game of hide-and-seek.
We ran around bushes and looked in the gazebo, to no avail.
We couldn't find it. Alas! It disappeared without a trace.
Near the lilac bushes our mother cooked cherry preserves
And skimmed onto plate white, sugary foam.
We dipped our fingers in it to taste the sweet, sticky stuff.
Our mother shook her finger warning us: "It is enough!
Go! Go away! You'd better find some other place to play."
We ran on the green lawn and, holding each other's hands,
Began to whirl round and round until we fell onto the ground
And saw again in the deep blue sky a cloudlet that drifted by.

After so many years gone by, it's hard to find the words
To tell about the events that happened during my long lifetime,
All the hardships endured. Much has forever been forgotten.
But my golden childhood, though like lightning flashed by,
Remained in my memory as deep and clear as the blue sky.



A Petition to the Tsar

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

I remember very vividly an event that happened when I was about nine years old, in the beginning of 1904. At that time the Russian-Japanese War started, and my father was called to serve in the army. He had to hurriedly finish all his customers' orders and depart quickly to join his military outfit.

Without my father's earnings, my mother had no choice but to dismiss the two servants who helped her with the household and her seven children. My paternal grandmother, Anna, came from the village Nikolskoye to stay with us and to help her with the children. And my mother's sister, Yekatyerina Iosifovna Grudzinsky Domogadsky—we all called her Aunt Katya—and her young daughter, our cousin, Alexandra whose nickname was Sasha, moved in with us and helped with the washing, ironing, mending, and sewing. Aunt Katya had recently lost her husband to tuberculosis and, having exhausted all their savings during the last years of her husband's illness, had a hard time making ends meet.

My mother was very distressed that my father had to leave his home and family to go to the Far East to fight against Japan. As soon as he departed, Mother visited many important people in town seeking their counsel. On their advice, she submitted a petition to the Tsar appealing for her husband's release from military duties as the sole breadwinner of a large family with seven children.

In order to state her case more strongly, she decided to include a photograph of the whole family. Having our picture taken was a big event for the whole family. My mother brought all of us seven children and our grandmother, Anna, to the photographer. All of us were neatly dressed in our best clothes. This photo¹ of the whole family without my father, and another taken later with my father, were preserved with care as family heirlooms. I saw them so many times that I still remember many of the details in them.



Family of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya. First row from left: sons Ivan (Vanya) and Alexander (Shura). Second row: daughters Anna (Nyusya) and Antonina (Tonya); Mother, Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; son Nikolay (Kolya); Grandmother (Babushka), Anna Davidovna Berezhnaya; baby daughter, Olga (Olya); daughter Tatyana (Tanya). Slavyansk, Kharkovsky Province, Russia, 1904.

This photo was made after the Father, Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy, was drafted for the Russo-Japanese War (February 1904 to September 1905). His wife, Natalia Iosifovna, mailed this photo to the Tsar with a petition appealing for her husband's release from military duty as a sole breadwinner for a large family of seven children.

The photographer carefully arranged us in a pose. In the front row sat my grandmother, dressed in a flowered print peasant blouse and gathered skirt. She held my younger sister, Olga, in her lap. My mother wore her Sunday dress with a front panel of a dress, called *plastron*, decorated with pintucks. She sat rigidly straight with her hand on the shoulder of my younger brother, Vanya, who stood in front of her. Next to Vanya and close to my grandmother sat my brother Shura. Both Vanya and Shura were dressed in their Boy's Elementary School uniforms.

I stood next to my mother with my elbow on her shoulder and my mouth open in expectation of something happening. No wonder, the photographer had told us, "Be still, don't move, and

look right into the camera and you will see a bird fly out of it." My sister Nyusya stood next to me, and my older sister, Tanya, stood next to Grandmother with her hand on her shoulder. All three of us, Nyusya, Tanya, and I, were dressed in our Red Women's Gymnasium uniforms—a wine-colored dress and a white apron with a bib that was worn only on Sundays and to church, instead of the black apron and bib worn on weekdays. We wore narrow-toed, high black shoes with two elastic straps on the sides that were used to pull them on.

In the center of the photograph, next to my mother, stood my older brother, Kolya, with his hand on Mother's shoulder. He wore his Men's Gymnasium uniform with its stand-up collar and metal buttons.

After the photograph and the petition to the Tsar were mailed, we all anxiously awaited, wondering when my father would be allowed to come home. But it was not to be. The town's authorities notified my mother that her husband could not be released from service. Instead, the Crown granted assistance to her seven children. She received a monthly subsidy designated for large families of soldiers who served in that war. Additionally, they told her that the town would provide free tuition, books, school uniforms, and shoes for all of her children.

At that time, we lived in the first small house that my father had bought before I was born. The house had two rooms for the children; in one, all the girls slept, and in the other, all the boys slept. Each child had his own bed. A hall divided the children's rooms from a great room, which served as a parlor and dining room during the day. The room was also a bedroom at night—at the far end of this room, opposite the door, stood my parents' large bed.

In the front part of the room, beside a window, was a dining table and chairs, and in the corner, a gilded icon of the Savior hung. The top and sides of the icon were draped with a long cross-stitched linen scarf, called *rushnik* in Ukrainian. In front of the icon, hanging from the ceiling on a long chain was an oil icon-lamp, which was lit on Sundays and holidays. Under the icon was a small corner table where my parents kept their volumes of the family Bible and The New Testament. On this table were also placed the traditional Easter and Christmas foods once they were blessed by the Parson.

Placed in the center of the room were upholstered chairs and a sofa, and against the wall stood a brand-new piano, bought for us girls to practice our piano lessons given in our schools. At the end of the hall was a big kitchen with a large brick stove, a big kitchen table, and a narrow bed for the servants. An arched doorway divided the kitchen from what was originally intended to be the dining room, now my father's tailor shop.

During the time our father was at war, my aunt Katya slept with my mother in her bed. Her daughter Sasha, who was older than any of us girls, slept on the servant's bed in the kitchen. And my grandmother, Anna, to whom I was more attached than any of my sisters, slept with me in my bed, as she used to do always when she came to visit us from her village. I liked to cuddle in bed close to my grandmother and felt special, because she preferred to sleep with me and not with any of my sisters. This time, I missed my father very much, who every night used to come into our room, bless us, and kiss us on the cheek or on the forehead. Sleeping close to my grandmother, I felt secure and protected.

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1. The 1904 Berezhnoy's family photograph, private collection of Yelena Zinovyevna Naygovzina Avakyan, granddaughter of Tatyana Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Tatarskaya and daughter of Marianna Solomonovna Tatarskaya Naygovzina. Yelena gave a copy of this photo as a gift to her great-aunt, Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladky, for her hundredth birthday.



The Contagious Disease Trachoma

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

When my grandmother Anna came to stay with us after my father went to war against Japan, her eyelids were red and swollen, and she was constantly drying her tears. Nobody paid much attention to this, since her eyelids were often irritated from working in the fields. But this time it was different; she had an infection in her eyes that would not heal. She slept with me in my bed, and I caught from her the contagious disease trachoma. And sadly, it was not diagnosed right away.

It was a long and insidious disease. At its onset, my mother kept me in a dark room during the day, hoping that the infection would go away by itself. Grandmother Anna stayed with me and entertained me with folk tales. But my eyes were not improving, and so my mother took me to the local doctor. His name was Arkhangelsky, and he worked during the day at a hospital and gave me treatments when he got home in the late afternoon. I used to wait for him on the steps of his house, dreading his return because he treated the infected tissue on the inside of my eyelids with a lapis that burned my eyes. His prognosis for my recovery was grim; he told my mother that I would eventually go blind.

My mother always became grief-stricken by any of her children's illnesses; she was nervous, looked sad, cried a lot, and would try by any means or sources to find help for the sick child. Therefore, when she heard that I would lose my eyesight, she decided to take me to a well-known Jewish eye doctor by the name of Hirshman. To see him, we had to travel by train to the city of Kharkov. After examining me thoroughly, he said that, indeed, I would become completely blind, because the treatment with the lapis had burned the corneas of my eyes and, as I grew up, the scars on them would grow larger and obscure my vision. He told my mother to rinse my eyes with a boric acid solution, but

he didn't give any medication for infection.

Once my mother heard confirmation of the prognosis already given her by our local doctor, she would not find peace until she had exhausted all means to help me. Being a very religious woman, she prayed fervently, placing candles in the church, and she also prayed with me at home every night before I went to bed, both of us kneeling in front of the icon.

Then in the summer, she decided to seek further help for my recovery from the miraculous icon of the Holy Mother of God, *Neopalimaya Kupina*.² This icon was considered to be miraculous because during a fire that burned the whole monastery to the ground, it was the only icon that had remained undamaged.

The miraculous icon was brought once a year from the old monastery situated in the Svyatyye Gory³ to Slavyansk for the Yearly Procession. Along the sidewalks of Kharkovsky Street, every household placed near their gate a small table covered with a white tablecloth. On the table were arranged a loaf of bread, a pitcher of water, and burning candles; in the house, in front of the icon, the oil icon-lamp was lit.

The Batyushka, as the clergyman was called, would stop at each table, give his blessings over the bread and water and collect donations for the monastery. The water was then preserved during the year as holy water and was used to sprinkle sick members of the family. Those who wished for special grace would ask Batyushka to come into the house to pray and would give him a generous donation.

That summer, my mother invited Batyushka into our home; she knelt herself and told me to kneel in front of the icon, too. As the Batyushka recited a prayer, we repeated it after him, asking *Neopalimaya Kupina* for the miracle of healing my eyes.

Shortly after that, some friends told my mother that a woman eye doctor had come for the summer to a clinic at the Slavyansk Kurort at the subdivision of our town near Salty Lake. It was a renowned health resort, where many people from all parts of Russia came each summer. There was a clinic where well-known doctors practiced in the summer, and a sanitarium, where heated salt water, called *rapa*, and heated mud from Salty Lake were used for therapy.

There was also a park with flowerbeds, small fountains, many benches scattered throughout, and an outdoor stage, where an

orchestra played in the evening. Next to the park was a pine forest where visitors could hang their hammocks and rest in the shade while breathing the fresh resinous air. Around the lake, close to the pine forest, there were many cottages available for rent to out-of-town visitors.

We went to see the woman doctor. I stayed at the clinic for three weeks. Like the other patients, I received general treatment, such as nourishing meals, and baths in warm saltwater from Salty Lake. The woman doctor treated my eyes with some medicated ointment until the infection was gone. I began to see better, but the doctor told us that damage that had already been done to my eyes would leave permanent scars and that I would need to wear eyeglasses for the rest of my life. I came home wearing my first pair of glasses, which helped me to read and see at short distances, but at longer distances, everything blurred and went out of focus.

My mother was just happy that the infection was gone and that the glasses allowed me to read. She told me, “Tonyechka,⁴ my clever girl, the most important thing is that now you can read and learn and continue to have good grades in school.”

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1. A medication in a stick form, which was used at that time to burn out the infected tissue on the eyelids.
 2. The Unsinged Icon.
 3. The Holy Mountains, not far from Slavyansk, where a monastery was rebuilt for the miraculous icon sanctuary.
 4. Endearing of name Tonya.



My Little Sister Natasha

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

During my father's absence, my mother was frugal with the subsidy she received from the government. When the war against Japan ended abruptly due to the defeat of the Russian fleet, the men began to return home by rail.

The local railroad branch, called Vyetka, connected the three major subdivisions of Slavyansk: Slavyansk Station, Slavyansk Town, and Slavyansk Kurort. The families of the returning men gathered at every local station to wait for the train, hoping to greet their returning fathers, sons, and brothers. On the corner of Railroad and Kharkovsky Streets, Bankovskaya station was located next to the town's only bank. For several days our whole family waited there whenever Vyetka was due to stop.

One day, as all of us were looking in the direction of the oncoming train, we suddenly heard a faint voice coming from the road on the opposite side of the railroad tracks and saw a horse-driven cart with several men on it.

"Natalia... Tanya... Tonya..." And as the cart came closer, we all rushed in surprise to embrace my father. He told us that some of the men didn't have the patience to wait for the Vyetka train and had hired a cart to bring them home sooner.

After embracing my father, my mother immediately presented him proudly with an unexpected gift. It was a bank savings account book listing all the amounts of money she had saved from the government subsidy that she received while he was at war.

Since my father and mother agreed that our aunt Katya and her daughter, Sasha, should remain to live with us, my father decided to build a larger house. He took out a bank loan that was guaranteed by some of his richest clients. With it he had built on our lot a one-story, white brick house, right next to the old one. Just as the house was finished in 1905, my youngest sister, Natalia, was born, and we called her Natasha.



Family of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya. First row from left: Father, Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy; sons, Alexandr (Shura) and Ivan (Vanya); Grandmother, (Babushka) Anna Davidovna Berezhnaya; baby daughter, Natalia (Natasha); daughter Olga (Olya); Mother, Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; second row: son Nikolay (Kolya); daughters, Antonina (Tonya), Anna (Nyusya) and Tatyana (Tanya). Slavyansk, Kharkovsky Province, Russia, 1910.

One episode remained vivid in my mind about my youngest sister Natasha, who was always sickly from birth and had some kind of congenital abnormality. All of us girls helped our mother take care of her. We all loved our little sister and played with her as if she was our doll, holding her in our arms, teaching her to talk and walk, things she never mastered.

My mother tried to find help for Natasha from the doctors, but they could not help her. When it came to the illnesses of her children, my mother didn't limit herself to doctors and to popular folk remedies, but complemented them with fervent prayers, candle burning at home and in the church, and, if nothing else would help, she did not hesitate to call in folk healers to help.

When candles and prayers did not help, and Natasha's health took a turn for the worse, my mother became desperate in her search to save her baby. One day she heard about an old woman who had healing powers and invited her into our house. We all gathered around her to watch the treatment.

The old woman took Natasha in her arms and, constantly

crossing herself and our baby sister, muttered some prayers for a while. Then suddenly she rushed out onto the porch, lifted Natasha high in the air and started to shake her vigorously. Natasha gave a piercing cry, and we all got scared; I screamed, and my sisters began to cry. The old woman pushed the scared, crying baby into my mother's arms, telling her that her healing treatment was complete and that Natasha's health should improve soon. She swiftly grabbed her fee from my mother's hand and hurried towards the gate.

My mother gently lulled and calmed Natasha down, while all of us stood around her expecting to see an immediate improvement in her condition. But we were greatly disappointed and sad, because Natasha died a few days later. My mother was in great grief after losing her baby, but my father consoled her, "All of us loved our little Natasha and made her short life on this earth as happy as we could. But we should be thankful to merciful God, who didn't allow her to suffer too long and took her to heaven."



The Thunderstorms

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

Another impression of my childhood that had a lifelong effect on me was due to my mother's obsessive fear of thunderstorms and her behavior as she warned us children about them. As soon as lightning would start far off on the horizon and thunder could barely be heard, she would anxiously summon all us children into the house and order us, "Stay far away from the windows! Hurry! Come here! Get on your knees under the icon and pray with me!" She would pray with such a frightened voice that we would feel threatened by the approaching lightning flashes and thunder rumblings, and we would sincerely join her in praying.

One day, a thunderstorm caught my sister Nyusya and me when we were playing with our neighbor's girls. We were on the second floor of their apartment in the house across the street from ours. Their father, a doctor, who was at home when the storm began, went right away to the glass-covered veranda. "Come, come, girls!" he called all of us, "Come to admire nature's most spectacular show!"

His daughters joyously followed their father, while Nyusya and I were hiding inside the room as far from the windows as we could.

"Come, come, girls! There is nothing to be afraid of," our neighbor tried to calm us.

"Stupid little girls!" our friends laughed and teased us from the veranda.

"Look at us, we are not afraid!"

"Our mother tells us to stay away from the windows," I promptly justified our behavior.

And Nyusya added, "We obey our mother."

We were afraid, confused, and ashamed, all at once, but the fear was stronger than being laughed at, and we stayed inside until the storm passed. Our friends teased us for a long time after this incident, but we always had the same answer, "We obey our

mother."

"Where have you been?" anxiously asked our mother when we got home.

"At our neighbor's house," we answered.

"Did you remember to stay away from the windows, and have you prayed?"

"Ye-e-es," I answered hesitantly, "But we forgot to pray."

Another very memorable incident involving the thunderstorm occurred during one of our summer vacations. Every year at the end of the summer we used to visit our paternal grandparents in the village of Nikolskoye. It happened during one of our visits when the four of us, Kolya, Tanya, Nyusya, and I, were there. It was in August, when thunderstorms are common in the Ukraine. At that time, all the melons and watermelons were ready to be picked. Our grandparents took them to the market in Slavyansk every Sunday.

That summer, upon his return from the market, Dyedushka Danil, as we called our grandfather, came to our house and took us with him to stay in the village for a week. My mother had prepared each of us a small bundle containing a change of clothes. We used them to sit on in the wagon, so we would have a smoother ride over the unpaved, bumpy country road.

During the day we stayed with Babushka Anna, as we called our grandmother, in a large straw hut that stood at the crest of the hilltop where the melon field descended toward the river. It was well built, and so it was dry even when it rained. We also slept there at night on straw padding without any blankets because the August nights were very hot.

We helped to collect the ripe watermelons and melons. We put them in a big pile near the hut and then covered them with a layer of straw. It was a lot of fun. We liked to find a very big watermelon and sit on it, pretending it was a horse. If we found a cracked one, we would break it into big pieces and eat it right on the spot, letting the sweet juice trickle down our hands, arms, and faces.

Babushka brought bread, lard, and salt from home. With vegetables from the garden that was just down the hill near the riverbank, she cooked a soup for us in a black cast-iron kettle over a straw fire outside the hut. We would all eat the soup with the wooden spoons right out of the kettle; take a bite of lard, then a

bite of bread and a spoonful of soup, and then a bite of freshly picked cucumber or tomato. For dessert we would have a ripe, sweet-smelling melon or juicy watermelon.

I was always curious, wondering how those big watermelons could grow from such a small plant. Babushka would answer, "That's how God makes them. You see how callused my hands are? God is rewarding us for our hard work."

But Dyedushka explained it even better. He would take a handful of earth and tell me, "Take this soil in your hands. Don't be afraid; it is our Mother Earth. Look how black it is; it's a good, rich soil. With land like this, we will never go hungry. We work hard to make this land fertile, and the land rewards us with plentiful crops."

Then I was wondering, how this black soil could make such red and yellow sweet-tasting fruits. But no one could give me an answer to this question. My grandfather would only comment to my grandmother, "This one is as curious as our Gavryusha was."

On Saturday, my brother Kolya, who loved to be around the horses, would harness them and drive the wagon up close to the melon field, stopping it on the road. We would all bring melons and watermelons across the field one by one to the road, where Dyedushka would load them onto the *harba*, a high wagon made from wooden planks. It had to be loaded and ready to go on the road to Slavyansk very early on Sunday morning, when it was still dark, in order for Dyedushka to get to the market on time. We would ride on top of the watermelons and sleep most of the way.

On that particular Saturday evening, Tanya and Kolya went with Dyedushka on the loaded *harba* to the village, and Nyusya and I stayed at the straw hut to sleep with Babushka. We were sitting near the hut on the top of the hill almost ready to retire for the night, and Babushka was doing something nearby.

Suddenly, huge black clouds covered up the sky and almost touched the hut's pointed roof. We saw Babushka running toward us and screaming, "Quick! Quick! A thunderstorm is coming!" She grabbed both of us by our hands and started to run away from the hilltop toward the village.

"Hurry, hurry!" she prompted us. "We have to run to the nearest cottage." Before we reached the cottage, a violent storm began, and lightning kept striking the hilltop. The thunder was so loud that it felt as though we were right in the middle of it. We

were terrified.

As we entered the first cottage we came to, the woman there met us with both fear and relief in her eyes. She exclaimed, "Thank God, you got out on time! I thought that all of you were hiding inside the hut and that you were burning along with it. Did you see? It was a straight hit! Look, see how it burns!" We watched from her cottage windows as flames engulfed the straw structure. It quickly disappeared, leaving only smoke rising from that spot. Frightened and clinging to Babushka, we spent the night in the peasant's cottage.

The next morning, we had a late start. Dyedushka wanted to see the site and show it to my brother, sister, and me. Only the gray ashes, still wet from the downpour, remained; the hut and all that was in it had burned to the ground. We were able to salvage only the black cast-iron kettle that had been left outside.

When we got home and told our mother what had happened, she got very upset, but at the same time she was very happy and was able only to repeat over and over, "Didn't I teach you to hide from the lightning? God himself gave the presence of mind to Babushka to get you out of that hut! It makes me shiver to think that all of you could have perished in that fire!"

This incident reinforced my fear of thunderstorms and convinced me that my mother was right to be afraid of them. For the rest of my life, I couldn't overcome my fear, and, as soon as I would hear thunder or see lightning far off on the horizon, I would hide in a safe place away from windows and sometimes pray.



My Parents Were Devoted Christians

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

Both my father and mother were very devout in their faith. They belonged to the Russian Orthodox faith, called in Russian *Pravoslavny* faith, which was a State Religion. My father was a member of the Church Council of the Sobor, a cathedral that stood on the central Soborny Square. All the family attended Church services every Sunday. And, when celebrating religious holidays, my mother strictly adhered to all *Pravoslavnya* traditions. From early childhood, my mother taught us children to pray and expected us to say our prayers before going to bed.

My father liked to read the Bible in the evenings, but he read very slowly. To understand it better, he often asked us children to read to him aloud from the Bible. I was deeply impressed with my father's unshaken faith in God and in the Holy Scriptures. When I read them to him, he always tried to find passages predicting the future. I could never figure out what all those writings meant and always wondered how my father could understand them so well, how he could decipher from an old book something that might happen in the future.

When Germany and Russia were at war in 1914 during World War One, my father was eager to get firsthand news, so he began to buy the newspaper and read it aloud by putting syllables together slowly and pronouncing the words. Later, at the first signs of the Revolution, he told me, "Now, you can see it was all predicted in the Bible." I couldn't see it even then.

My father was also really good at arithmetic and always helped us with our homework. He helped me solve the problems through reasoning. But when he helped my sister Nyusya, she found it easier to ask him to calculate and give her the results rather than do it herself.

My mother's education did not extend beyond elementary

school and, although she was literate, as a devoted Christian, she read only the New Testament and the Bible. We did not have any other books in our home, except for our school textbooks. However, my father and my mother both considered education to be important for us children, and we were all expected to study hard and continue our education beyond gymnasium, as secondary school was called, in order to specialize in our chosen field of occupation.

My father never interfered with how and what my mother taught us children, for he believed that his wife was a good mother and could teach us right behavior and manners. But he also taught and disciplined us when he was not busy with his tailoring tasks or with his customers.

Although my mother believed in God and in the power of prayer, she also believed in all the folk superstitions, prejudices, bad omens and good signs. She believed that the interpretation of dreams could predict events to come in her life and consulted with her friends on that matter. She also trusted the cards to predict future events, and, when something was bothering her, she asked my grandmother Anna to see what was in the cards for her. I liked to watch my grandmother spreading the cards out on the table and wondered how she could tell from looking at them what would happen to somebody. Although my grandmother didn't know how to read and write, she knew the language of card-reading well. Listening to her, I was convinced that she was very smart.

My mother also believed strongly in all folk remedies and practiced them on us children and on herself. The cough was cured with warm milk and honey; the bad chest cold was cured by applying heated cupping-glasses, or so called suction cups, to the front and back of the chest. Sore throat was cured by applying around the neck compresses of linen cloth soaked in alcohol, then covered with a piece of wax paper, an abundant layer of fluffy cotton, and finally a piece of wool cloth.

At the first sign of any childhood disease, children were isolated in a dark room to speed up the course of the illness. Cuts and skin infections were covered with a split leaf of aloe vera plant that was pot-grown for that purpose in the house. The fever was reduced by placing a cold-water compress on the forehead. And I remember that my mother very often had bad headaches,

and her preferred remedy was to lie down, place a cloth soaked in cold water and vinegar on her forehead, and send one of us to get her friend, who would sit next to her and tell her all the current gossip until she fell asleep.



The Easter Holidays

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

My mother, as a devoted Christian, adhered to all religious Russian Orthodox holiday rituals and also followed strictly all the folk customs and traditional and seasonal festive ceremonies. I vividly remember some of them, especially the most important—Easter and Christmas.

Long before the Easter and Christmas holidays, my mother would begin sewing new clothes for all her children. She would go to the fabric merchant, the one my father recommended all of his customers buy cloth for their orders from, because he had the best-quality fabrics. She would buy, at discount prices, many yards of the same fabric for all the girls' dresses and petticoats, and for all the boys' shirts. Then she would hire a seamstress to sew in our home for a week or more, because it was cheaper than paying her for making each item.

My father would sew all new suits for his growing sons. Then my mother would buy for us, girls, new straw hats with bows that matched our Easter dresses or felt hats for Christmas. The year my father was at war with Japan, she still managed to dress us up in new clothes for the holidays.

The two weeks before Easter were a very busy time for my mother. She cleaned the whole house thoroughly: she scrubbed all floors, windows, and doors, and also washed, starched, and ironed all curtains. That week she hired two women in addition to our two regular servants to help her to do all those chores.

Then there was a cleansing ceremony on Holy Thursday of the Holy Week before Easter. My mother used to bathe all of us children early in the morning before sunrise. It was not considered really a bath, but rather a holy cleansing before Easter. When we were little, my father would come to our room, gently wake us up, take two girls in his arms and bring us into the kitchen where my mother had filled with warm water a wooden *koryto*, an oblong wooden trough that was used for bathing and

for doing laundry. Then she would bathe us, two at a time. We all were bathed in the same water that was not changed; hot water was simply added to what was in the trough to warm it before the other children were bathed.

A linen sheet decorated with lace was used to dry us after our bath. This sheet was used only for special occasions and was also used for christening all the children in the family. It was dried out in front of the hot open oven while we bathed. After our bath, my father would take us in his arms and gently put us back to bed, covering us carefully with the blanket all the way over our ears.

On Palm Sunday, we all went to the church with branches of pussy willow that symbolized in the Russian Orthodox tradition the palm leaves that did not grow in our part of the country. The clergyman would sprinkle holy water on the branches, and we would put the branches in every room of the house.

It is a Russian and Ukrainian tradition to have for Easter two kinds of special desserts called *paskha*—they were my mother’s specialties. One was tall, cylinder-shaped sweet bread called *kulich*¹ with candied fruit and raisins, and the other was a cottage-cheese *paskha*.² In addition to the special *paskhas* for their families, all the women would bake several extra-small sweetbread *paskhas* and decorate half a dozen extra eggs to donate to the Batyushka during the blessing ceremony in the churchyard.

A few days before Easter, we children loved to help my mother decorate Easter eggs. After the eggs were boiled and cooled, we would place them in a decoction prepared ahead of time by my mother from various parts of fruits and vegetables. By dipping the eggs in a strong tea, it would give them a light brown color; in the juice of boiled beetroot—in a wine color; in a liquid from boiled onion skins—a light yellow; in the juice of preserved cherries—red; in a solution of bluing powder for the laundry—blue; and by adding a small amount of bluing powder to a boiled onionskins liquid—green.

On the Saturday before Easter, the blessing ceremony was held in the churchyard. All the women brought their baskets with Easter eggs and baked sweet *kulich* wrapped in a large, white, square kerchief or a small tablecloth tied at the four corners. They would line up in neat rows, put the packages on the ground, untie the kerchiefs, and wait for the clergyman to come and sprinkle holy water on the goods and give his blessings. The altar boys

followed the clergyman with big baskets in which to collect from each woman her donated eggs and *kulich*.

Arriving home, my mother would place the basket of blessed eggs and *kulich* in the dining room on the corner table below the icon and light the icon-lamp hanging over it. The eggs and *kulich* were left there until Easter dinner was served.

On Easter Sunday, all the people from town and the nearby vicinities would come to Sobor, the town's cathedral, for a big, solemn service. Whole families would walk slowly down the streets and across Soborny Square. Most people knew each other in our small town. The family would stop and salute each other ceremoniously with the traditional Orthodox Easter greeting,

"Khristos voskryesye!"—"The Christ has risen!"

"Vo istinu voskryesye!"—"Indeed, He has risen!" would answer all.

Usually, the Easter weather was warm, and everyone would parade around in his or her festive clothes. Women and girls proudly displayed their fluffy dresses and turned their heads right and left to make the ribbons on their straw hats float in the air. Men and boys, dressed in their best suits, white shirts, and bow ties, would carry themselves in a dignified manner. And the boys would even refrain from the urge to pull on the girls' floating ribbons.

The Easter ceremony was solemn and beautiful. The Cathedral was brightly illuminated with candles, and the golden decorations on the icons, as well as, the clergymen's festive ceremonial robes, and implements sparkled and multiplied in each other's reflections. The soft streams of bluish smoke arose from the incense lamps that were swung in slow motion by the clergymen. Smoke slowly dissolved and drifted everywhere, filling the air with the sweet fragrance of the burning incense.

The choir sang beautiful Easter hymns. All listened to the clergyman's droning chanting prayers in the Old Church Slavonic language that enveloped everyone in the mystical experience of the sacred religious rites. Exiting the church, the people smiled and were friendly to each other, as if the Easter ceremony had lifted their spirits and erased their worries. Everyone went home in this elevated, festive mood.

For Easter dinner, my mother would roast either a whole piglet or a half lamb and put it on a special oblong tray in the

middle of the table. It was served with fried or mashed potatoes and sautéed pickled cabbage. Around it would be placed all kinds of delicacies purchased from the Taganesov Delicatessen: smoked fish, sardines, sprats, black and red caviar, and a variety of cheeses.

Before starting the festive dinner, our father would say a prayer and solemnly pronounce, "*Khristos voskryesye!*" And we, all together, would answer, "*Vo istinu voskryesye!*" Then my mother would pass around the basket of blessed Easter eggs, and each of us would start by eating a colored egg. Only then would we begin with dinner. The dinner would be completed with generous portions of *kulich* and cheese *paskha* that we children eagerly awaited to be served.

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1. Easter bread or cake.
 2. Creamy cheesecake made entirely from fresh creamed cottage cheese, sour cream, sugar, egg yolks, candied fruits, raisins, nuts and flavored with vanilla. It was shaped in a tall cylinder form, cooled in the cellar, and then decorated all over with colorful candied fruits.



Christmas

By Antonina G. Gladky

I remember my childhood Christmas.
Snowdrifts are all around.
Caroling is heard near the door.
Boiled wheat grain and compote are served;
The whole family is already at the table.
Father, crossing himself,
Invites everybody to the Holy Supper.
Solemn stillness wraps the room.
Then my grandmother begins a tale,
Deeply imprinted in my heart,
About the night the Christ was born.
The angels sing glory to the Newborn,
The wise men hurry with gifts to Bethlehem.
I fall asleep with wonderful dreams.
In the morning, early-early,
Mother wakes me up,
“Get up, my child, hurry up,
They are already here,
The boys with the star to
Glorify this Christmas;
And Old Man Frost has brought
Our Christmas tree to us.”
I run and—Ah!
The door in the living room is open wide,
The Christmas tree is standing there
And on top the star is shining.

The boys' choir sings in harmony.
And Old Man Frost presents gifts to all.
What a great joy Christmas is—
The triumph of eternal peace!



Christmas Festivities

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

I remember that, as I was growing up the most memorable of all festivities was, of course, Christmas. For a whole week there were preparations for that day: the entire house was thoroughly cleaned; festive tablecloths, table runners, and doilies were put on the tables. The day before Christmas, all the children were bathed. Near our beds our festive clothes were laid out, so we would be ready early in the morning for church. New dresses had been made for the girls and new suits for the boys.

All the food was prepared in advance—there was no cooking done on holidays. On Christmas Eve we had a Holy Supper; only Lenten food was prepared for that occasion. In the dining room, under the icon with its lit icon-lamp, on a small corner table covered with straw was a new earthenware pot full of *kutya*¹ and another one of sweet *uzvar*.² These two traditional Christmas Eve dishes were first taken to be blessed in church. The dining table, covered with its festive tablecloth, would be set up with cold dishes, such as jellied fish *som*,³ fish in tomato sauce; pickled cabbage; and boiled millet with a dressing of onions sautéed in sunflower oil. There were always baked or fried *pyrozhky*, which were about four-inch individual pies, stuffed with boiled dry beans, or mashed potatoes, or sautéed sauerkraut. And in the middle of each dish stood a straw cross crafted by us children.

The whole family would gather in the evening, our grandmother coming from the village. After the first star appeared in the sky, we would all sit at the table, including our servants. My father would say a prayer, and then everyone would cross himself or herself and start to eat. At the end of the meal, we would all eat *kutya* with honey and *uzvar*.

Then my grandmother would tell the children the wonderful story of Christmas. After that, the younger ones were put to bed, and the older ones helped the adults set up a Christmas tree and adorn it with pretty decorations collected throughout the years

and chains of colored paper made by us children. And when the older children were also in bed, our father and mother would put the presents under the tree.

Christmas morning, we would all get up early and run to see our Christmas tree and all the presents placed around it. We would try to outguess each other as to what was in each package. We could not touch them until we all returned from the morning service. "Hurry! Hurry!" Our mother would call, "Dress up in your festive clothes! We will be late for church!" I remember that the whole family, including our servants, would walk to church. It was always very cold and, as we walked, the snow crunched under our feet, and the frost bit our cheeks and noses.

Christmas Service in church was very long and solemn. The choir sang beautiful, triumphant songs about the birth of Christ. The clergymen wore ceremonial robes embroidered with golden threads that shone in the flickering light as if they were from some enchanted story. The burning oil lamp, candles, and incense emanated a balmy, sweet smell that added to the mysterious, sublime atmosphere. We knelt and prayed according to Christian Orthodox Church rites as we had been taught in school, where Religion was a required subject for all but Jewish children.

When the service ended, all the parishioners would congratulate joyfully each other with the traditional greeting, "*S Rozhdestvom Khristovym!*" which means "Merry Christmas!" The men shook hands, and the women embraced or kissed one another as they replied their greeting, "*S Rozhdestvom Khristovym!*"

The children pulled their mothers' and fathers' sleeves impatiently, imploring them:

"Let's hurry home!"

"I want to see my presents."

"Let's go and see what *Dyed Moroz*⁴ had brought to us!"

We would then hurry home to open our presents. Each of us found a package of candies and chocolates. The younger children found under the tree bigger packages with toys—a doll, a rocking horse, or a train. The older ones found small packages with gold locket, chains, or earrings. For grandmother there would be a new kerchief, or a blouse, and for my mother some trinket for the house. My father got no presents, because there was no custom to give presents to grown-up men.

The Christmas dinner, prepared the day before, would already be on the table. Holiday dishes would be elaborately decorated, and my mother would prepare special foods such as roast duck, or goose with Macintosh apples baked together with the fowl. There would always be *okorok*—a whole ham, and homemade *kolbasa*—a sausage, both baked in the oven and served with sautéed, pickled cabbage. And, of course, there was a *kholodyets* made from pig's legs boiled until the broth would become jellied when cooled in the cellar. For holidays, my mother also bought some delicacies at the Taganesov's store: smoked salami or ham; sardines or spiced sprats; smoked fish; tiny, spiced, salted fish called *kilka*; black or red caviar; and a variety of cheeses.

For dessert, she would prepare rice pudding with lots of sweet raisins. There would also be large oval trays loaded with all kinds of cookies, pastries, and cakes, sweetbreads with candied fruit, and small baked *pyrozhki* stuffed with fruit preserves from our own garden. Then there were several fancy-shaped bowls filled with assorted candies and chocolates, too.

After dinner, the table would be neatened and set with refreshments for guests. My mother put a bottle of vodka on the table and a selection of her noted brandied fruit drinks called *nalivka*. Our neighbors stopped by to bring holiday greetings to our family; my father's customers would also drop in for a few minutes. They all would bring gifts for us children, mostly boxes of chocolates or candies—so many that we would munch for weeks after. Then, the guests would sit down and have refreshments. The men preferred to have *pirozhki* or a slice of bread and caviar, and most of them usually had a small glass of vodka or *nalivka*. The women preferred to have a slice of sweetbread or a pastry and *nalivka*. And the visiting children would be offered cookies, candies, and chocolates.

In the late afternoon and early evening, the youth and older children would go to the pond, where there would be a skating competition in which everybody could participate. I liked to skate, but I never won in any competition. We would all come home tired after such a busy day.

After supper, my mother and father went out to visit with their longtime friends, the Umrykhyns. He, as I recall, worked for many years as a salesman at the hardware store. My parents usually stayed there until late at night. Our Babushka Anna

would stay with us and tell us folk fairy tales. Sometimes the story was a happy one, and sometimes it was scary. If it was scary, we would cuddle up close to each other and listen with trepidation, afraid of how it would end.

On one of those Christmas nights, we were in the dining room sitting on the carpet under the big lamp and listening quietly to Babushka as she told us a folk tale about a goblin named Domovoy, an ugly and evil spirit. She told us about his mischievous behavior, how he liked to amuse himself by watching the people he scared with his little tricks. And suddenly in the middle of the story we heard, "Tack... tack... tack..." Then a few minutes of silence, and then again, "Tack... tack... tack..."

Babushka stopped telling her tale and sat in silence, listening attentively, trying to hear if the noise would repeat itself. And it did, "Tack... tack... tack..." We all drew close to her and grabbed her by the skirt. Then she got up, put her finger to her lips in a sign to keep quiet, and went tiptoeing out into the hall leading to the porch door.

We followed her, holding our breath. We couldn't hear anything. Then, we went to the bedroom door, trying to hear if the noise was coming from there. For a while there was again silence. Then we heard it, right over our heads, "Tack... tack... tack..." In apprehension, we turned in the direction of the noise and raised our heads. We saw that a loosened flue cover on the chimney wall was fluttering from the wind that blew down the chimney.

Though we found out what had been making the noise, we were not really sure if it was the wind or if it was Domovoy who had played a trick on us. We were still scared when Babushka told us to go to sleep, and we jumped into our beds and pulled the blankets up over our heads. For a long time after this incident we remembered with apprehension and were fearful of unknown noises in the night. "What is it?" we would fearfully ask. And someone would reply, "Maybe it's Domovoy!"

On Christmas day, our school vacations began. The whole week after Christmas, all the schools held celebrations for their students, and all the students were allowed to invite their friends as guests—that way, it was more fun. On those occasions, we all would wear our festive school uniforms. At each school, in the middle of the auditorium, there would be a huge Christmas tree

adorned with shiny toys, paper chains, and fluffy cotton “snow,” with a huge silver star on its top. All the students would receive presents, usually chocolates and candies, which they shared with their guests. The children would form one or two chains, holding hands, singing Christmas songs, and dancing in a circle to the accompanying piano music. Sometimes we would go to two or three other schools and come home joyous but exhausted.

I always vividly remembered those happy Christmas holidays of my childhood in my home and later in my declining years wrote a poem⁵ about it.

On other, less important holidays, all the schools in town would bring their students to the church for a special school service. All the students would wear their Sunday uniforms and would walk from school to church in pairs. The class preceptress—as the governess was called (in the schools for girls) or preceptor (in the schools for boys) would accompany each class. Mothers and townsfolk would come outside or look out their windows at the procession. All the schools had their assigned place in church. It was all so orderly and pretty to see each section in different color with the children wearing the same color school uniforms. The girls wore wine-red, light-blue, or green dresses with white aprons and donned felt hats in the fall and winter, or straw hats with ribbons of the same color as their dresses in the spring and summer. The boys wore gray, navy-blue, or brown uniforms with shiny metal buttons and cockaded visor hats that they would hold under their left arms in church.

This ceremonial and festive atmosphere elevated our mood and made our required recitation of prayers in the church more enjoyable.

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1. Traditional Christmas Eve dish made from boiled wheat grain.
 2. Compote made exclusively from dry fruits: apples, prunes, cherries, pears, and apricots.
 3. Sheatfish, a large freshwater catfish, poached and eaten cold.
 4. Santa Claus.
 5. See the poem “Christmas” by Antonina G. Gladky.



New Year's Eve and Epiphany

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

I also remember a folk tradition that my mother strictly adhered to that was fun for us children and became even more enjoyable as we grew older. It was the New Year's Eve fortune-telling custom called *gadaniye*. On that night, it was believed that all kinds of signs could be interpreted to discover what to expect in the New Year. This tradition belonged only to girls and women. Young and old, our friends and our mother's friends would gather in the evening and sit in a semi-dark room lit only by candlelight and perform shadow shows and other tricks that had been passed down from generation to generation.

One of the preferred ways to foretell the events that might happen in the next year was to burn a piece of crumpled paper on top of an old dish turned upside down in a room lighted by a candle. When the paper stopped burning, everybody looked at the shadow cast by the ashes on the wall, turning the plate until someone recognized something familiar.

"A ship!" somebody would exclaim.

"No, no... It is a church!" another would guess.

"It is a wedding... See, there are the bride and groom," a young girl would joyously announce. "Maybe it's for me!" And everyone would laugh.

"Turn, turn it some more! It looks like a big bear. What could that mean?"

"A long, cold winter ahead," some older person would say.

And then they would burn some more paper and guess—and then guess again until everyone had made an interpretation for themselves. The older folks would look more for a prediction of what might happen to adults and the family—births or deaths, town matters, weather or crops, or many other practical things. And the young girls looked for what to expect in their personal

lives—names of boyfriends, romantic encounters, or signs of marriage.

Later in the evening, when the younger children were put to bed, the older girls would place a shallow basin filled with water in the middle of the table, stick pieces of paper with men's names around its edges, and in the water set half of a walnut shell to float. In turn, each girl would stir the water with her finger, and then anxiously wait to see where the shell stopped and what name was closest to it. If it was a familiar name, they all would laugh and joke about him; if it was a strange name, they would guess who he might be.

Closer to midnight, the girls would run outside and throw a shoe to see in what direction it pointed when landed. That was the direction in which the young man was supposed to live. Also, shortly before midnight, my mother would gather up a few old shoes or dishes to throw outside because that meant she would be able to buy new things in the New Year.

Early in the morning of the New Year, it was important to listen to the first words one heard because they were an omen of what to expect in the New Year. We sisters would share what each of us had heard, "I heard Mother saying to the servant to 'hurry up.' That means a very busy year for me!" Or, "I heard my brother saying 'stop doing that!'" And the puzzled girl would try to guess what she should stop doing in the New Year. In our young minds, we believed without question in all these folk tales because all the adults around us also believed in them.

Another memorable ceremony took place on the twelfth day after Christmas, when the entire town gathered early in the morning on the shore of the River Toretz for Epiphany, called *Kreshcheniye*. The clergymen performed the religious rite of sanctifying the river water, and everybody would fill a container with this holy water and take it home. Each room in the house, the sheds, the barns, and the garden and courtyard were sprinkled with this holy water to protect the household from evil. Before entering a room, my father would light a candle, make a cross with its flame at the door, and then sprinkle the holy water inside the room.

Sometimes, when the river was not solid frozen, a few really courageous souls would jump into the river for a short dip in the holy water to be re-christened in a sign of devotion to the

Christian faith.

The day after *Kreshcheniye*, our school vacation was over, and we would all go back to school. At school we shared our impressions of the previous day and wondered how some people could be so courageous as to jump into the icy water. We would shudder and exclaim, "I would never dare do that!"



Our Parents Loved Us

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

Of my mother's most remarkable traits, one that I always remember, was that she was equally proud of all of her children and did not show preference to any one of us. I heard her become impatient many times with friends or neighbors who would single one of us out as the object of their compliments. It would happen often in the evening when some of our neighbors came to sit with my mother on the bench near our gate, crack sunflower seeds, and share quiet casual conversation. Or, it might also happen when some of her friends came for an afternoon tea.

When one of her friends would praise one of us children—especially in our presence—by saying, “What a pretty girl your Tanya has become! She has such beautiful, large, brown eyes and wavy, brown hair like her father,” or some similar comment, my mother would impatiently interrupt her. She would embrace me or any of my other sisters, and eagerly start praising the rest of us, “You are right about my Tanya. But, although my Tonya may not be as pretty as Tanya is, she is very likable girl, smart and diligent. In school, all her teachers praise her.” Then she would add, “And my Nyusya and Olyechka are very pretty, too; they have a light complexion like my side of the family, and they have very gentle manners.”

The same thing happened whenever somebody praised one of her sons. She would not allow anyone to single out any one of them. Each one had something that she was proud of: “Kolya, he is the oldest, he is studying well...” “Vanya is handsome and tall for his age... and Shura... Oh! Shura is the best helper any mother could want. At any time, he gets the samovar ready for guests. And, if there are no guests, he sits down and has tea with me...”

We all knew that our mother and father loved us, but neither openly or routinely showed their affection. They rarely kissed us, embraced us, or told us that they loved us. Very young children were allowed to sit on their knees or cuddle in their lap. There

was no required ceremony of kissing Father and Mother in the morning or before going to bed. However, we were expected to say "Good morning, Mama!" and "Good morning, Papa!" when we came in for breakfast, and "Good night!" to both of them before we went to sleep. Also, we were expected to address Father and Mother in the respectful form of "You," used in Russian when one spoke to persons of higher rank or older people.

My mother used kisses more as a reward for good behavior or good grades in school. In those cases, she would embrace us or caress and kiss our cheeks, rewarding us with phrases like, "Good girl!" or "You are my clever girl!"

My father was even more reserved about showing his affection. He would come to our room when we were supposed to be sound asleep (which was not always the case, because we all pretended to be sleeping when he opened the door). He would check on each of us to see if we were covered with blankets and pull them up to cover our ears. Then he would bend over and give us a light kiss on the forehead or temple, mumble a blessing and, holding the tips of his thumb, forefinger, and middle finger of his right hand together, make a wide cross over us. At that moment, we knew that our father loved us.



Learning Right from Wrong

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

We children used kisses as a means of asking our father or mother for forgiveness after we had done something considered to be wrong. I remember one such event, when I was about seven and my sister Nyusya was about six years old. We decided to play at having a vegetable and fruit market and collected our “merchandise” on a bench in our garden. Our attention was caught by a special kind of very tiny apples, Japanese apples, that grew in our neighbor’s garden. In our garden we had only the usual large apples, which we felt were too big for a make-believe market.

The two properties were divided by a fence, which we climbed over. We were overwhelmed by the abundance of fruit on that tree. The bottom branches were so heavy that they almost touched the ground already covered with a blanket of the fallen fruit. At first, we picked the withered fruit up from the ground, and then our attention was caught by the fruit on the tree. The apples were shiny and pretty-looking, a light amber color with one cheek blushing red. We began to fill our apron pockets. We were so involved selecting the best-looking fruit that we did not hear the owner of the garden tiptoe close enough to grab both of us by the arms.

He led us directly to our father. On the way he held our arms tight and repeated in a threatening voice, “You little thieves! You little thieves! I will teach you not to steal fruit from other people’s gardens!” And upon entering our father’s tailor shop, he exclaimed triumphantly, “Here, Gavriyl Danilovich, look who I caught in my garden stealing my Japanese apples! I hope you will teach them a good lesson!”

“Empty your pockets!” my father sternly ordered, “And return all the apples to our neighbor!”

Our neighbor collected them with an air of righteousness as he repeated his demand, "Teach them a good lesson!"

"I am sorry that my daughters got into your garden," said my father. "I will punish them for their transgression."

When our neighbor was gone, my father didn't even ask us why we took them. He gave us a long admonition and explained why we shouldn't take things belonging to other people without their permission. "Remember, this should not ever happen again. For your punishment, he ordered us, "go into different rooms and stay in a corner on your knees until you repent."

I knelt in the corner, feeling sorry for myself and thinking that our neighbor was a greedy man who made our father punish us for taking a pocketful of apples when he had so many and most were rotting on the ground.

After some time, my mother came into the room and asked me, "Well, haven't you repented yet? Go, and ask your father for forgiveness!"

"No!" I stubbornly refused, "No and no!"

"If you feel that way, then you will stay the rest of the day in the corner," my mother said in a stern but quiet voice.

At intervals she would come and ask me the same question, and I would refuse again and again. My knees were hurting, but I would not cry. The last time my mother came, she told me that Nyusya had asked for forgiveness already and that it was time for me to do the same. This time I gave up and went to my father.

"I am sorry, Papa," I said quickly, expecting his immediate forgiveness.

"And?" My father raised his eyebrows looking at me inquisitively over the glasses perched on the middle of his nose. He patiently waited for me to continue.

"I promise, it won't ever happen again," I added and quickly kissed him on the cheek, hoping that he finally would give me absolution.

"Was it a good lesson for you?" he asked me in a stern but not an angry voice.

"Ye-e-e-s," I answered hesitantly, still not convinced that my punishment was justified. But I didn't blame my father; I was angry with our greedy neighbor who had demanded our punishment.

"Well, go and play outside with your sister," said my father

gently, and he kissed me on my forehead. And I felt that he loved me.

Just as my father did, my mother usually spoke to us children very calmly and did not raise her voice or scold us very often. However, I remember one time when my stubbornness was too much for her. It was at a time when she did not have a servant to help her with the daily chores. My mother asked me to sweep the kitchen floor, but I refused to do it, and, when she tried to put a broom in my hands, I ran away from her. She ran after me with the broom. We ran round-and-round the kitchen table. By then she was so upset that she lost her temper and punished me. But, in the end, I still didn't sweep the kitchen because she needed it done right away, and so one of my sisters did it.

My father didn't use corporal punishment with us girls, but I remember one incident when he did use it on my brother Kolya. It was summer, and all the fruit trees in our garden were thickly covered with foliage. Close to the porch, we had a tall, old pear tree. My father went outside to do some chores and saw that smoke was coming from the pear tree. He came closer and saw my brother sitting on a branch, smoking.

"Come down, come down, son," my father very calmly told him. Kolya slowly came down. "You see those lilac bushes over there?" Father asked and added very firmly, "Well, go and cut some good branches and bring them to me."

"Yes, Papa," replied Kolya with resignation.

Kolya took his time to cut a bunch of branches and handed them to my father, knowing well what to expect next.

"Now, lie down across this bench," father told him firmly. There was no way to argue with my father. He whipped Kolya so hard that Kolya lost his voice from screaming. But the lesson was well worth it, because after that, his entire life long, my brother never smoked.



I Hated Freckles and Loved to Be Funny

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

With so many brothers and sisters, all the children resembled either my father's or my mother's side of the family. I remember as a young girl that I felt early on the disappointment of not being as pretty as the rest of them, whom I considered to be very handsome. I always thought that I more resembled my paternal Babushka, whose old face was weathered from working in the fields.

One of the bitterest experiences I had was in dealing with my red freckles. Oh! How I hated those freckles! I had them on my nose, on my face, and on my arms. Everywhere I went, children teased me, especially the boys.

"Red freckles!"

"Red freckles!"

"Ha-ha-ha!"

How this annoyed me and made me very unhappy! As I got older, this feeling became even more painful, especially when, while on my way to gymnasium, the older boys would tease me. I would get all red in the face, which made it worse, because then they would have even more fun teasing me. But I compensated for this by being very vivacious and funny, and the children who knew me liked me for it, and I had many friends.

My sister Nyusya was only one year younger than I was, and we had a lot of fun together. She loved to listen to me imitating all kinds of foreign languages, which I did very well. I remember that one time many Chinese men came to our town. They sold door-to-door silk fabrics that they called "Che-su-cha." They carried big bags of merchandise on their backs and, when invited into a house, would display all the fabrics on the table. They spoke broken Russian with such a funny Chinese accent that we children, who gathered around to see the spectacle, could not

keep from laughing. It seemed that the Chinese didn't mind this and happily laughed with us, "Khi-khi-khi, khi-khi-khi..."

In the evening, when we sat with Nyusya on the bench outside our gate, I used to entertain her. I would say, "I have already learned how to speak Chinese." She would ask me to show her how well I could speak it. And I would start to babble, imitating a Chinese accent. Nyusya would laugh and laugh and ask me to "speak Chinese" again and again, sometimes laughing until she wet her panties.

Every summer, a very good circus came to our town and stayed for several weeks. What entertainment it was for us children! I didn't care much for the acrobats, but I liked the dancing horses and, most of all, I loved the clowns. After the circus was long gone, I entertained my brothers and sisters and our friends by imitating the clowns.

One summer, when I was twelve or thirteen, I and a neighbor boy who was probably fourteen or fifteen, decided to have our own circus. He lived not too far from our house. His family had a big courtyard and a large barn. He cleaned up the barn and built a trapeze on which he could perform with another boy. He also recruited some neighborhood girls and boys as actors. Of course, I decided to be a clown. The other girls were going to be dancing horses.

All the neighbors were invited to our circus. They had to bring their own benches or chairs. Usually, we had from thirty to fifty people, both children and adults, in the audience. My performance as a clown was so funny that I became the star of the show. I even received flowers and candies from my admirers. The show was very successful, and we repeated it for couple of summers until we lost interest in it as we grew older. By that time I had many friends, both girls and boys, with whom I had a lot of fun. And somehow, the freckles didn't bother me anymore because my friends liked me as I was—maybe they didn't even notice them.



My Mother Was a Thrifty Housewife

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

During my last years in gymnasium, my sisters and I helped my mother with some of the chores, especially during school vacations. I watched my mother with admiration. I was impressed with her ability to manage the household and budget for such a large family. She was an economy-conscious housewife and kept expenses down by buying provisions in season and in quantity and wisely managing household help. She usually purchased fresh vegetables at the market, but most of the vegetables for preserving for winter provisions were bought at reduced rates from my grandfather Danil when he brought the produce from his garden to market on Sundays.

Summer was a very busy time for my mother. My grandmother Anna, Aunt Katya, and one of the servants helped my mother with the traditional pickling of vegetables in large wooden barrels. They pickled green and red-ripe tomatoes, large red peppers, cucumbers, and cabbage with which were also pickled sweet-sour tasting Antonovka apples that my father liked very much. All the other vegetables were preserved for the winter in a cool cellar that was dug deep under our house and had a separate hatchway next to the back entrance of the kitchen.

At the farmers' market, my mother purchased provisions sufficient for the whole winter: flour, salted lard, sunflower seed oil, and all kinds of grains for a *kasha*—the porridge. She stored it all in a large pantry off the kitchen. In addition, she purchased pounds and pounds of butter, melted it on low heat, skimmed the white foam, poured the clarified butter into bottles, sealed them with corks and sealing wax, and stored them in the cellar. When she needed the butter, she would simply put a bottle in warm water to melt it, and it was ready for cooking. This butter didn't spatter, because all liquid and milk residue was removed from it.

To keep the home cool in the summer, all the cooking was done in the summer kitchen, a wooden structure in the courtyard. In it was a big brick stove with a large oven, allowing my mother to do all the cooking and baking outside. Nearby stood an old, tall, shady pear tree, around which was built a table and benches that we sat at for meals on hot summer days.

When the fruits, many of which grew in our garden, were ripe and sweet, all of us children helped to pick them. Of course, as we picked them, we ate as much as we wanted. My mother would carefully select the best fruits, wash them thoroughly, and then, following a precise recipe of equal weights of fruit and sugar or honey, prepared all kinds of preserves.

The first fruits to ripen were the strawberries; next were cherries and sour cherries, raspberries, and gooseberries. The red, white, and black currants ripened a little bit later. Then it was time for preserving the apricots and plums, apples and pears, and small Japanese apples, which she had to buy from our neighbor. In the summer, we also gathered the pink, wild-rose flowers from the eglantine bushes that grew in our garden. My mother made a delicious, pink, sweet-smelling, delicate preserve from the petals.

The preserves were cooked on low heat in a wide copper basin and, to prevent the mixture from sticking to the bottom, it was constantly stirred with a large spoon for several hours until the syrup reached the consistency of fresh honey. As it simmered, white foam formed on the bubbling surface, and my mother constantly skimmed it with a spoon and collected it on a plate. All my sisters and brothers hung around the summer kitchen, taking turns licking the sticky foam from a small spoon that was placed there especially for us. For the rest of my life, I vividly remembered those happy times of my childhood when I played in the garden with my younger sister, Nyusya, while my mother made preserves, and later I wrote a poem² about it.

My mother also prepared a specialty that my father liked very much; sweet-and-sour marinated plums. And we children helped her by carefully skewering each plum with a pin, allowing the juice to flow out, and then placing them in neat layers in terra cotta jars. Next, my mother made a marinade of vinegar, sugar, and laurel leaf, and poured it over the fruit. The jar was then covered and left on the shelf to be aged for several weeks before the plums were ready to eat.

My father also liked my mother's homemade *nalivka*, a liqueur made of various fruits: cherries, plums, raspberries, black currants, and eglantine rose petals. About half a bottle was filled with skewered fruit, and then sugar was added in equal weight to the fruit. Each bottleneck was covered with gauze, and the bottle was placed on a sunny windowsill for several days until the fruit's juice was released and fermentation began. Then the bottle was filled with vodka, sealed with a cork, gently shaken, and placed in the pantry to be aged for at least a month.

My mother fed the family well, not only with nutritious foods, but also with a variety of very tasty meals. She was a very good cook and knew how to use cheaper meat cuts to prepare delicious dishes. Although it was always more work and took a lot of her time, it was worth it to see her family enjoy food that was healthful and nutritious, and which cost about half as much as meals with expensive cuts of meat. However, on Sundays and holidays, she prepared roasts from expensive cuts of beef, pork, lamb, chicken, ducks, or geese. She knew how to cook all the traditional Ukrainian foods, like *borshch* and *kasha*. But she also knew how to make more elaborately prepared dishes—desserts, pies, cookies, and other baked goodies.

For breakfast, the younger children ate cream of wheat cooked in milk and drank warm boiled milk. The older children and adults on any morning could have a soft-boiled or fried egg with bread and butter. Other choices mainly depended upon what was in season. In the spring and summer everybody liked to have some kind of salad—lettuce, tomatoes and cucumbers, or radishes—all included scallions, hard-boiled egg, and sour cream dressing.

Later in the summer when eggplants were in season, I always asked my mother to make my preferred spread, *ykra*, which I liked to heap high on a slice of bread. It was made from the pulps of a baked eggplant and tomato flesh and seasoned with onions sautéed in sunflower seed oil.

In the winter, my mother prepared the nutritious *pashtyet*, a spread made of boiled, finely chopped liver with onions that had been sautéed in sunflower oil. It was always ready for us children to spread on a piece of bread for breakfast or for a snack.

My father preferred a stronger-tasting spread, *farshmak*. It was made of finely chopped, salted herring and fresh onions mixed

with bread soaked in sunflower seed oil and vinegar. Sometimes my father simply liked to have marinated herring with a slice of bread.

In the winter, we had the always-popular Russian salad, *vinagrette*, made of boiled, cubed potatoes, beets, pickles, and fresh onions with a dressing of sunflower seed oil and vinegar. My father always added lots of pepper to it, because my mother used pepper sparingly in her cooking for us children.

In the morning, for the children, there was always warm boiled milk to drink. But in the summer my father liked to drink sour, refreshing buttermilk that was stored in the cellar. My mother always liked to drink hot tea, with either milk or a slice of lemon. For lunch and dinner at the dining table, there was lemonade or plain water. My father, however, preferred to drink *kvas*, a homemade fermented drink made from dry bread, yeast, water, and sugar. My mother aged the *kvas* in a small wooden barrel placed in the pantry off the kitchen and always kept a big pitcher full of the cool drink in the cellar.

For the first course of lunch and dinner, there was always *borshch*, or some other soup. There were two kinds of *borshch*; one made with meat stock and small pieces of meat in it, and one that was meatless, with a condiment of onions sautéed in sunflower seed oil. Soups were made with potatoes, carrots and onions, and always had added to them one of the filling ingredients: *lapsha*—homemade egg noodles; or *galushky*—small pieces of soft, loosely kneaded dough pinched with the fingers; or *ushky*—tortellini stuffed with minced meat; or pearl-barley, or rice, or some other kind of grain.

In the summer, some soups were served cold. Everybody in our family liked *shchavelny borshch*, a soup made of meat stock, potatoes, and coarsely chopped sour sorrel leaves and fried onions, spiced with dill and served with coarsely chopped hard-boiled eggs and a spoon of sour cream. My father, however, preferred to have *okroshka*, a cold soup made with *kvas* or with yogurt, mixed with finely sliced fresh cucumbers, radishes, and green onions, served with small pieces of *taranka*, a dry, salted, sun-dried sea roach fish found in the Azov Sea. On occasion, my mother made a kidney soup with beef kidneys (that she soaked first in vinegar), potatoes, and onions sautéed in butter, served with finely diced, newly pickled cucumbers.

For the second course of lunch and dinner, my mother prepared such a variety of meat and fish dishes that I can't remember them all. The meats and fish were served usually with *kasha* made from some kind of grain, or with rice, or noodles flavored with butter; or with mashed potatoes; or white or red beans, or peas, or lentils flavored with onions sautéed in sunflower seed oil. There was always a tray on the table with pickled tomatoes, pickles, peppers, and cabbage. Each person would take as much as he liked to add some sour flavor to the food.

The most common of the meat and fish dishes was *kotlyety*, patties made of ground meat or fish with some bread soaked in milk, eggs, chopped onions, salt and pepper, rolled in breaded crumbs and sautéed in clarified butter. There was another meat dish, called *tiftyely*—meatballs in tomato sauce baked in the oven. We all also liked *golubtsy*, made of cooked minced meat mixed with cooked rice and eggs, wrapped in cabbage leaves, covered with tomato sauce and baked in the oven. In season, my mother made our favorite dish—*farshyrovany* sweet red peppers or squash, stuffed with a mixture of cooked minced meat, rice, shredded carrots, eggs, onions sautéed in sunflower oil, and fresh dill, covered with tomato sauce and baked in the oven.

But one of the family's favorite dishes was *varenyky*, a kind of large ravioli. The filling varied with the season and the occasion. Sometimes they were filled with cooked minced meat and served with sour cream; sometimes with mashed potatoes or with sautéed, pickled cabbage and seasoned with onions sautéed in sunflower oil; sometimes they were filled with cottage cheese and served with sour cream or fruit preserves, or powdered sugar; and in the summer, they were filled with sweetened sour cherries and served with sour cream or honey.

My father also very much liked *kholodyets* made from boiled pork legs or portions of pig head, jellied in the cold cellar and served with homemade mustard, vinegar, or horseradish.

For the evening meal, my mother often made *oladky*, small, thick pancakes that we children liked to eat either with sour cream, fruit preserves, or honey; or she made *blinchyki*, delicate, thin crepes filled with precooked minced meat, or cottage cheese, or stewed fruit in season, and served with sour cream.

In the evenings we often had some kind of *kasha*, or porridge:

buckwheat *kasha* served with butter or milk; millet *kasha* mixed with mashed, baked pumpkin, butter and sugar; or, in season, we had young sweet corn-on-the-cob with butter.

For snacks and for refreshments, when the occasional guest stopped by, my mother used to bake *pirozhky*, small individual pies made of yeast dough with all kinds of fillings: precooked minced meat basted with butter; mashed potatoes; cooked, mashed white beans; mushrooms; or sautéed pickled cabbage. Each of these fillings was basted with onions sautéed in sunflower seed oil. Or the *pirozhky* were filled with rice mixed with chopped hard-boiled eggs and basted with butter; or, in season, with fruits from our garden—sour cherries, apricots, apples, or gooseberries.

At any time of the day, we children could have a snack of plain cookies called *korzhyki*, and, of course, any fruits in season from our garden. Some of us preferred to have just bread and butter; and all we children loved *googol-mogol*, an egg yolk creamed with sugar and butter. We liked to make it ourselves sitting on the bench under the pear tree.

For dessert, my mother prepared either *kissel*, a potato-starch pudding with fruit; or custard made of eggs and milk. She also often made *yablochnyk*, a rice pudding with sliced apples that was baked in the oven. In season, she baked apples and served them with an abundance of honey, or compote made of fresh fruit in the summer or *uzvar*, made of dried fruit, in the winter.

On Sundays and holidays, my mother prepared special dishes. All of us liked fried or roasted chicken with fried potatoes. My father and brother Kolya preferred lamb roast or stew with potatoes. My father also liked roasted duck or goose with Antonovka apples cooked together with the fowl. My mother's preferred dish was jellied or baked freshwater fish, such as perch, pike, or carp, which she stuffed with a mixture of rice and hard-boiled egg. The fish she usually served with mashed potatoes. Occasionally, to our delight, she would buy the local crayfish. We all liked baked ham or the homemade thick sausage called *kolbasa*, both served with sautéed pickled cabbage.

Then, for big holidays, she would spend extra to make a meal special. She would buy from the Taganesov's store delicacies like smoked salami, ham, or fish, sardines, sprats, *kilka*, Dutch cheese, and other cheeses.

However, my mother's specialty was baking. Every week she

baked whole grain bread for our meals, sweet bread with raisins to have with tea or breakfast, fruit pies with fruits in season, and all kinds of cookies, pastries, and cakes.

My older sister, Tanya, liked to help my mother when she was baking, and she learned all of my mother's recipes and baking skills. But, I, notwithstanding my admiration of my mother's culinary skills, was never interested in baking or cooking. I simply didn't like to cook. Instead, as I grew older, I preferred reading books, especially the French and Russian classics that I was fascinated with.

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1. See the chapter "How Danil and Anna Lived."
 2. See the poem "Golden Childhood."



Ties with Grandparents and Relatives

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

My father was always so busy with his tailoring business that he could never find the time to travel and visit his relatives in the village of Nikolskoye. Over time he lost touch with most of them. But his father and mother kept in touch with him and with our family. After market on Sundays, our grandfather, *Dyedushka* Danil, would stop in our house and visit with our father in his tailor shop. Sometimes he would be accompanied by his oldest son, our uncle Stepan. Usually, my father would offer them a snack of salted herring and a glass of vodka. Grandfather could not stay long at our house because the visits were always during harvest season. He had to be back in his village by Sunday night to be up early the next day to work in their vegetable garden and melon fields.

When Dyedushka came to visit, all of us children would greet him, "*Zdravstvuytye, Dyedushka!*"—"Greetings, Grandfather!" There was no kissing.

He would ask each of us, "Have you been a good girl?" or "Have you been a good boy?"

Of course, the answer was always the same, "Yes, Dyedushka."

Then he would give each of us a hug and a five-kopecks copper coin, which was one twentieth of a ruble, and we would always thank him politely, "*Spasibo, Dyedushka.*"—"Thank you, Grandfather." These coins we could spend as we pleased, mostly for ice cream or sweets.

For some reason, my mother was never very friendly with her father-in-law or brother-in-law, and I don't remember that she ever invited them to eat with us. All I remember is that she used to talk with Dyedushka or Uncle Stepan only when they brought for our family selected vegetables for pickling, or winter

provisions of potatoes, carrots, beets, cabbage, and onions, and at that time she bargained with them over the price.

However, I never heard my grandfather complain to my father that they were not treated well by my mother. But I heard occasionally that Babushka did complain to my father that his "proud Polish wife" did not treat Berezhnoy relatives with the same respect and attention that she gave her Polish relatives Grudzinsky. On these grounds, my father and mother had an occasional quarrel.

But my father probably didn't give too much importance to the matter because my mother's father and mother visited our family so rarely. Usually they came with our uncle Fyedyia from Isyum for short visits with our family. They always stayed with their daughter, Katya, who only had one daughter and so could provide the extra care needed for her father, who was already deaf and blind, and her mother, who was also in poor health.

I have very dim memories of my maternal grandfather and grandmother because they died when I was very young. I remember that both were short with curved backs and needed someone to sustain them when they were walking.

As for my mother's other relatives, Aunt Katya lived right in Slavyansk and she, her husband, and their daughter, Sasha, often visited our family. My mother was very fond of her older sister, but, with so much work to do for her large family, she rarely visited her. My father also had a friendly relationship with his brother-in-law, Novogadsky. Later when Aunt Katya's husband died from tuberculosis, she came and lived with us for a very long time. She helped my mother with us children and with the family chores.

My mother's brother, Uncle Fyedyia, often visited us because he came to Slavyansk for business; usually, on those occasions, he stayed for lunch or dinner with our family. My father respected him, and at dinnertime they always discussed business matters in which Uncle Fyedyia had a lot of experience, and my father often asked for his advice.

Therefore, relationships with my father's and mother's relatives became defined naturally by their mutual needs, interests, and by the time they had to travel and stay away from their work and daily obligations.

For as long as I can remember, it was only my paternal

grandmother, Anna, who stayed with us often and for long periods of time. This was because, with all the children and the housework, my mother always needed her mother-in-law's help. However, she really didn't have friendly or lengthy conversations with her. Maybe it was because both of them were usually busy and, when they did talk, my mother was telling my grandmother something about the things to be done around the house or about us children. I don't remember, however, that they ever quarreled or argued. My Babushka was very tolerant of and patient with my mother and with all of us children.

Babushka Anna loved all her grandchildren, and we felt her affection very much. However, I always felt and thought that she loved me more than any of my sisters or brothers, and I loved her very much, too. When she came to stay with us, she brought bags of freshly roasted sunflower or pumpkin seeds. She wore always a big apron over her skirt, and her skirt pocket was always full of seeds. When she arrived from the village, we would ask to touch her pocket right away and try to guess what kind of seeds she had. Then we put our hands under her apron and dug out a handful of seeds from her pocket.

As the years went by, Babushka Anna began to complain that Dyedushka Danil was drinking heavily and could not keep up with the work required to maintain the vegetable garden and the melon field. Stepan's wife and daughters took over that work. Dyedushka helped them for a while, but he could not stop drinking and eventually died of, as it was called, liver disease. My father went to his father's funeral and brought back with him what Dyedushka had left for each of his grandchildren, one five-ruble gold coin that I kept for many years and passed on to my daughter as a family heirloom.

After her husband's death, Babushka stayed with us for very long periods, going to the village only when she had to help feed Stepan's family—when the women were busy with the harvest in the fall or in the spring with planting. Her son Stepan and his wife were now bringing the produce to the market, so they came and got Babushka, took her to the village, and then brought her back to our home.

When I was in my last years at gymnasium, our Babushka complained that she felt something growing in her abdomen. Nobody took it seriously; everybody told her that she was just

getting fat because she wasn't working so hard in the fields anymore. Then one day, she went to the village and never returned to us. Uncle Stepan told us she began to have very strong pains and stayed in bed all the time. Soon after that, she died. For some unknown reason, only my father went to her funeral. I missed her greatly, and after all these years, I still remember her with affection.



Kharkovsky Street

By Antonina G. Gladky

I remember that, when I was a teenager, the Belichenkos were our neighbors on Kharkovsky Street in Slavyansk. My mother and Maria Ivanovna Belichenko were very good friends. Many afternoons they sat for hours at our big oval table in the dining room drinking tea, sometimes drinking almost the whole samovar. They had tea with honey or homemade preserves, and cookies, or cherry or apple pie made from fruit out of our garden. They talked endlessly about market prices, provisions for the winter, or the right time for pickling cucumbers or cabbage, and about what would make better preserves—honey or sugar.

Maria Ivanovna was a literate and well-read woman, and her husband, a former coal miner, was also a rather literate man. When they married, he left the mines, bought a small lot of land not far from Slavyansk in the village of Bantushevo, and started farming and beekeeping, like his father before him. Several years before World War One, when their children were ready to attend school, they moved to Slavyansk. He bought a large house next to ours and built an additional small house in the courtyard. He lived with his family in the big house and rented the small one to the ladies' tailor, Khaykin. During the spring and summer, he stayed in the country and farmed, bringing home produce; in the winter, he returned home and kept himself busy in the metal trade.

Belichenko was a sullen and terse man and seldom visited his neighbors. But occasionally, in the evening, he would come to sit with my father on a bench beside the gate. Then he talked about news he had read in the newspaper *Yuzhny kray*—"The Southern Country." For some unknown reason the news he reported was always about faraway places, about what was happening in South America, or in the Philippines and other Southern countries.

It was very strange that he rarely talked about Russia and, if he did, he talked with restraint, expressing his opinions almost

casually, saying something like this, "By the way, Gavriyl Danilovich, Russia needs reforms," or comment, "Our neighbor, Germany, may soon march against Russia." And sometimes he mentioned very cautiously, "Who knows, there might be a revolution in Russia."

My father argued with him hotly on this matter, "You are wrong, Belichenko; this cannot happen! Everything is in order in our Russia. You can see it with your own eyes, how people live in our town. Let's take, for example, our Kharkovsky Street. People work, build houses, educate their children; everyone is dressed well, nobody is hungry, every man is master of his own life. What else does a person need? The town is growing and improving..."

And going to bed, my father used to reassure himself, "Some reforms maybe, if they are for the better... But, revolution? What for? This is Belichenko's fantasy. He is probably possessed by revolutionary ideas. And all this—because he is not attending church. He is an atheist, but he sends his children to church. His wife is a good Christian, and a fine housewife and mother..."

My father could not fall asleep for a long time after those conversations with Belichenko. In his mind he was reviewing his own life and that of his neighbors. The lives of shopkeepers, artisans, small merchants, and tradesmen, who, like himself, had built their economic security upon humble beginnings through years of hard, honest work, perseverance, and frugal living; who had established for themselves and their families a dignified and respectable way of life. The whole length of Kharkovsky Street, where he had lived for forty years, was spread before his eyes. He was witness of its growth.

My father reflected on his own lowly family descent and how well he had done so far in upgrading himself from the son of a peasant to a *myeshchanyin*.¹ And he reasoned with himself:

"Well, as a tailor, I did my work well; my reputation grew fast, and I became one of the best tailors in town. The customers appreciated me, the townspeople trusted me, and it was possible to get a bank loan to build our houses. The family is growing, business is thriving, and I have built next to my small house a larger one of white brick. And a few years ago, I built in place of my first small house, a two-story one of red brick. My older son, Nikolay, will be married soon—there will be a place for his family and for my other sons or daughters, if they need it.

"I had, and still have, the boys and young men apprentices to whom I teach my trade, as I was taught in the past. And I have a senior apprentice and a master tailor to help me in the shop. Some of my former apprentices already work on their own and are doing well. Take for example, Arkady—what a nice fellow he was and diligent, too. But Styopa Bolotov, that one, never went farther than apprentice, he never wanted to learn, he was a vagabond and is still a good-for-nothing."

Then his thoughts switched to his family.

"We were fortunate that most of our children survived all their childhood diseases, except Vasya and little Natasha. Our oldest son, Vasya, died very suddenly of diphtheria when he was in the second preparatory class—the merciful God did not make him suffer too long.

"Little Natasha was born in poor health. It happened sometime after I returned from the Japanese War in 1905. In her short life she remained sickly and never learned to walk. My poor wife took her to many doctors, but no one could find out what was wrong with her. After my wife had burned many candles and recited many prayers in church and at home, God took our little Natasha and placed her among the angels. For one year she was among us, she was surrounded by our love and brought us joy, especially to her sisters, who took care of her and gave her lots of affection.

"All the other children, thanks to God, grew up healthy. All attended school, though not all have graduated yet. Our now oldest son, Kolya, has finished architectural technical school and is already on his own, drafting plans for new homes. Our oldest daughter, Tanya, will soon be going to dental school; the other daughter, Tonya, wants to be a teacher, and still another one, Nyusya, wants to be a doctor. God willing, I will help all of them to get their education, as I did for my oldest son. The two younger sons, Vanya and Shura, are attending boys' secondary schools; the youngest daughter, Olya, is attending girls' secondary school; and the youngest son, Petya, is still a little boy..."

After reflecting on his own family, my father pondered about the other people he knew.

"I am not the only one who lives like this. The ladies' tailor, Khaykin, who came from a poor Jewish family, also worked hard and has had his rewards. Before he rented a small house from our

neighbor Belichenko, and now he has a two-story brick house like mine built on Ekaterinoslavsky Street and has a shop on the ground floor. His son studied music and became a good violinist."

Then he switched his thoughts to other successful people in town.

"My longtime neighbor, Dimitry Kuznetsov, the one who lives past Belichenko's house, has his own blacksmith's shop, and he is a very good master blacksmith. His son lives next to him. He is also a blacksmith, and he also has his own house. At the other end of the street, closer to the center of town, lives the shoemaker, Krasny, who has his own shop and repairs shoes for the whole town. Next to him is the bakery of the Greek, Avanesov; he makes the best bread in town. Further out, there stands the Inn Rossia, and on the street corner there is the recently built town bank. Across the street there is another inn and Kotlyarov's print shop."

His thoughts moved farther from his home.

"At Soborny Square in the center of town, there are many shops and stores full of merchandise and produce: Sidorenko's shoe store, Khristov's fabric store, Rostovtsev's haberdashery shop, and so many others, it's hard to count them all. On the other side of the Square stands Karyakin's hardware shop, and Spivakov's warehouse—filled with wheat, flour, and all kinds of grains and cereals. You can buy as much as you want and from whomever you like. You can bargain over the price and, if you don't like it, go on to the next store! On the corner is the Armenian Gulbenko's grocery store, and on the other corner stands the Armenian Taganesov's Delicatessen, the largest in town."

Then his mind began to remember other good things about his town.

"In the center of Soborny Square stands the Cathedral, where on Saturdays the bell calls the townspeople to vespers. And on Sundays people come from all parts of town and its vicinities. There, the town's families have all their ceremonies performed—christenings for their children, weddings for the young, and funerals for those who have left this world.

"The town has four secondary schools, three for girls and one for boys, and there is also a vocational, a business, and a technical school, and, of course, there are several elementary and parish

schools. All families send their children to school. If the family cannot pay the tuition, the town takes care of it.

"Life in town flows calmly, peacefully. As long as I can remember, there have been no riots or killings. Perhaps, every so often there might be some drunken passerby who unsettles this peaceful life."

His mind relaxed after these thoughts. And he suddenly concluded that everyone who tried and worked hard was able to live the good life in his town.

"And how many different nationalities live in town! Only on Kharkovsky Street alone live Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Armenians, Polish, Greeks, and Germans, all right next to each other. On the other side of town, near the River Torets, Bulgarians who cultivate vegetable gardens have settled, and Gypsies who trade horses.

"In town there are many factories and plants—the famous Kusnyetsov's china plant, a brick plant, a soda plant, Bytkov's salt plant, Smirnov's metallurgical plant, Polyakhov's timber warehouse... There is enough work for everybody. The plant owners and the merchants are making money, tradesmen are prospering, and workers earn good wages, too—I know that, because some of them are my customers. We have never had any strikes..."

Then he recalled all the improvements in town.

"All the townspeople already have electric lighting in their homes. There are a club, two movie theaters, and the nice Shelkovichny Park with old Mulberry trees and with a pond next to it; in the winter children and youth go skating on it. In the vicinity there is Kurort, a resort on Salty Lake. People from all parts of Russia come there to have treatments of hot salt baths or salty mud applications to alleviate their rheumatic pains..."

He switched again to the abundance people of this town enjoyed.

"Then, one has only to see what kind of markets are in our town! On Saturday nights farmers bring from nearby villages and khutors (farmsteads) all kinds of produce for sale. They all come to Soborny Square, where every Sunday there is a farmers' market, and two times a year it hosts big fairs. Then, cart after cart with squeaking wheels moves along Kharkovsky Street. The farmers bring for sale flour, grain, bread, milk, buttermilk, butter,

sour cream, farmer's cheese, eggs, and honey; live, slaughtered, and roasted poultry; they pull along cattle and sheep, and carry in cages pigs, geese, and ducks... Good Lord! It is impossible to describe all that they bring in such abundance. It is enough for everybody and for all pocketbooks..."

And again, his thoughts returned to his conversation with his neighbor Belichenko, and he asked and reasoned with himself.

"Who needs another system? Is it possible that somewhere in the world people live better than we do? I will never believe it. And if the Tsar rules over us, it doesn't harm anybody. It has been this way from ancient times. Besides, there are the ministers and Duma—Council of the State. The state needs to be governed, otherwise, the cart will fall apart. But revolution! It can't happen! I will never believe that the Russian man could be an enemy to himself. It must be some bitter enemy who stirs up trouble in the people's minds. Maybe Belichenko is right about one thing, the Germans, who might start a war with us. God save us all..."

And my father began to pray and to cross himself before falling asleep.

1. Member of a lower middle class, also called "petty-bourgeois."



Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy

*As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky, Vladimyr N.
Berezhnoy and Nikolay N. Berezhnoy*

The oldest son of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy, Nikolay, was born in 1893 in Slavvyansk.¹ At home they called him Kolya for short. Being older than his four sisters, Tanya, Tonya, Nyusya, and Olya,² and his three brothers, Shura, Vanya, and Petya,³ he didn't play childhood games with them. During the years he was growing up, as a boy and as a teenager, or later when he was a student at technical school, he had a circle of friends his own age with whom he kept company instead of his younger brothers and sisters.

Gavriyl Danilovich was very fond of his oldest son and, being a wise father, guided him, instilling in him a drive to further his education in a professional career, for which Kolya had shown an inclination. Therefore, after Kolya had successfully graduated from the town's School for Boys, he enrolled in Technical School, where he specialized in architectural engineering.

His father was very proud that his son was successful in school. By the time Kolya had graduated from Technical School, Gavriyl Danilovich had remodeled the previously rented space on the first floor of their red brick house into an apartment for Kolya, and he equipped one of the rooms as an architectural studio. Since Gavriyl Danilovich had several building contractors among his best customers, he asked them to try out his son's skills by giving him small orders to help him get started. At the same time, he gave his son the advice to start with very moderate fees and to do his best work in order to establish his professional reputation.

Under these favorable conditions, Kolya began to earn his living drafting architectural plans for local building contractors who, from the beginning, were impressed with his high-quality work and soon gave him more complex orders. They often

praised Kolya's work to Gavriyl Danilovich, who felt great satisfaction at his son's achievements. He was even able sometimes to find time out of his busy day at the tailor shop to visit the construction sites of some of the homes being built according to his son's plans.

At that time, besides conscientiously pursuing his professional career, Kolya, like most young men his age, was actively dating the young girls in town without becoming seriously involved with any of them. In that small, provincial town, everybody knew everybody, either personally or by reputation. And Kolya was considered to be a very eligible bachelor, because not only he was a good-looking young man, but also because he was a desirable prospect for a husband—he already had a promising professional career and a secure income with which to provide a comfortable living for a wife and family. Those qualifications were appreciated not only by the young girls but also by their parents, who allowed their daughters to flirt with Kolya, to invite him to visit them in their homes, and to date him casually in hopes that it would lead to a more serious relationship, and perhaps engagement and marriage.

Kolya was a handsome young man. He had some traits of both his mother and his father. He was of average height and slender build, with his father's wavy, dark-brown hair and high forehead. From his mother he inherited small facial features, a small mouth, and a light complexion. But what made him stand out from other young men of his social circle in town were his impeccable and fashionable clothes. As a master tailor, his father could buy at discount the best wool fabrics from local merchants and then tailor outfits that fit Kolya to perfection. So, Kolya sported both fabrics and workmanship that only the rich men could afford.

Not far from the Berezhnoy house on Kharkovsky Street lived a well-to-do family that had their origins in the impoverished nobility. They had a very beautiful daughter, whom they educated according to the traditions of their lost rank. She studied in a highly prestigious school for young ladies in a big city and came home only during school vacations. For this reason, in Slavyansk she was nicknamed *Studyentka*.⁴ Being out of town most of the year, she didn't have any close friends in Slavyansk and rarely participated in its social and youth activities, except for attending Sunday and holiday church services with her parents.

One day, when she was walking to church, Kolya noticed that she had suddenly changed from a pretty-looking little schoolgirl into a beautiful maiden. He was so impressed with her refined manners and her elegant clothes in the latest big-city fashion that he could not take his eyes off her during church service. After church, he followed her at a distance when she went home with her parents. He was fascinated as he watched her walk with the dignity of a lady; she held her head high and maintained a perfect balance of her slender and graceful figure. Everything about her distinguished her from the other provincial young girls that Kolya knew, and he instantly fell passionately in love with this mysterious maiden.

He stopped dating all the other girls he had been flirting with and began to court intensively the beautiful and mysterious *Studyentka*. She gracefully accepted his attention, seemingly with the approval of her parents. Vacation time passed very quickly, and impatient Kolya rushed up to propose to her before she left for school again. But she absolutely rebuffed the idea of marriage for reasons Kolya never told anybody. When she didn't accept his proposal, he was devastated by her rejection.

A few days later, as he was walking home immersed in a terrible mood, he encountered Katya⁵ Grechko on Kharkovsky Street near her father's inn. Katya was one of several young girls Kolya had dated on and off before he fell under the spell of *Studentka*. Kolya was so absorbed with brooding over his broken heart that he almost passed Katya without greeting her. She was the one who stopped him with a cheerful greeting and asked what had happened to him, why he hadn't come by to see her for such a long time.

Katya's lively voice and her playful kitten's touch on his hand had a soothing effect on Kolya, and, with her close to him, he suddenly felt at ease, comfortable and relaxed. As had happened many times before, when he was disappointed or tired of other girls that he dated, Katya would take him back with open arms and make him feel wanted. And he felt happy and content in her company. Katya had always known that Kolya dated other girls, but this had never become a problem. Their relationship always remained friendly, allowing him to return to her every time one of his relationships ended.

The same thing also happened this time, after his infatuation

with *Studyentka*. In one evening, with her joyous and outgoing personality, Katya was able to console Kolya and allow him to lick the wounds of his recent humiliation at being in an unsuccessful courtship. And right there, as they walked up and down Kharkovsky Street, Kolya quickly made a decision and asked Katya to marry him. Katya immediately, without hesitation, accepted his proposal, as she had been patiently expecting it for a long time.

After his passionate and intense courtship of the beautiful *Studyentka*, Kolya surprised everyone—his parents, family and friends—by suddenly announcing that he and Katya had decided to marry and wanted to have their wedding as soon as possible. However, Kolya's decision to marry Katya was probably not as sudden as it seemed to others; for him, it was probably the natural outcome of their long and steady relationship. And for Katya, it was a patiently expected proposal that she had dreamed about for a long time.

Katya was from a typical provincial, petty-bourgeois⁶ family that raised her to accept the traditional woman's role and place in society according to the customs prevailing at that time. She had just graduated from a gymnasium but did not intend to study any further for a specific career, as did some young girls, including Kolya's three sisters, who pursued careers already at the beginning of the twentieth century. Instead, Katya followed the traditional role of women of those days; she wanted to find the right husband, have a home, children, and be a good housewife and mother.

Katya was an attractive, pleasant-looking, young girl with well-proportioned facial features, plump rosy cheeks, big round eyes, and long brown hair parted in the middle, combed softly over her ears and then rolled into a bun at the nape of her neck. She was of average height and was somewhat plump all over. Her large, well-shaped bosom stood high on her chest. Altogether, she was the picture of a healthy-looking, fully developed young woman in the prime of her life. She was always well dressed, according to the provincial fashions of young girls her age. But most of all she was jolly, good-natured, and carefree.

Katya was the daughter of the local innkeeper, Iosif Iosifovich Grechko, who owned several inns in town. One of his inns was only a block and half away from the Berezhnoy house, toward the

center of town, a few houses from the corner of Zhelyesnodorozhnaya⁷ Street, on the other side of the railroad tracks. When Katya was young, her family lived next to the inn on the upper floor of the Butkovs' house. She liked to tell the story of how she fell out of the second-story window when she was about three years old and the funny answer she gave when she was asked how she fell, "Just straight down."

From the time her mother died when Katya was about seven years old, she lived with her aunt Varya⁸ and uncle Misha⁹ in their house, located in the direction of Kurort, not far from the local railroad station, Shnurkovskaya. Aunt Varya was Katya's mother's sister. She and her husband, Misha, raised Katya, while her older brother, Boris, stayed with their father until he was accepted at military school.

Aunt Varya was unable to have her own children, but her husband succeeded in having a daughter outside of marriage. Her name was Polya,¹⁰ and they had adopted her immediately after birth. Polya was an unruly and difficult girl. Even her father could not easily make her be obedient. Aunt Varya always intervened between her husband and his daughter, for he often had the tendency of punishing Polya more harshly than she deserved. Although Aunt Varya tried to give Polya as much affection as she gave Katya, she couldn't help being more attached to her good-natured niece, who reciprocated her love.

Katya was younger than Kolya—she was about his sisters' age, but when she was still in school, they didn't have much contact with her because she attended another gymnasium located near her aunt's home. When she was older, Katya was at her father's Inn, where she stayed long hours during the day and also into the evening. She helped take care of the guests and, when needed, prepare and serve their meals. This gave her an opportunity to learn good housekeeping and cooking skills and to meet people of all ages. It was at this time that Kolya often dated her and grew fond of her.

After the wedding, Katya went to live at Kolya's place in his father's red brick house. Shortly after their marriage, Katya became pregnant, and on December 3, 1916, their first son was born in Slavyansk. They named him after his father, Nikolay, but in the family they affectionately called him Kotyk.

Gavriyl Danilovich and Natalia Iosifovna felt a great joy at the

birth of their first grandchild. Gavriyl Danilovich used to put Kotyk on his big tailor's table and allow him to play with a box of buttons, making Petya, his five-year-old son, jealous of the attention his father gave to his grandson.

Natalia Iosifovna appreciated Katya, as she thought she was a good wife for her son Kolya and praised her for being an excellent cook and housewife. But she was disappointed and complained often to her husband and her daughters that her daughter-in-law, Katya, did not show as much affection to her and Gavriyl Danilovich and, in general, to the Berezhnoy family, as she showed her relatives, Aunt Varya and Uncle Misha, with whom she maintained a very close attachment. However, during the time they lived close together, Natalia Iosifovna and Katya maintained a peaceful relationship and did not quarrel.

For a few years, Nikolay worked steadily for local building contractors, and he had plenty of orders that allowed him to provide for his family's needs. In addition, while working for the local contractors, he received a lot of practical experience in the actual construction of homes and commercial buildings. However, remaining in Slavyansk did not offer him immediate opportunity for professional growth as a building engineer, so he began to search in larger towns for employment with large, reputable building contractors. He found such a contractor in the town of Taganrog and moved there with his family. There, two partnering architects needed additional help with their large building contracts. They were very happy with Nikolay's work and rewarded him accordingly.

Nikolay's sister, Tonya, visited him in Taganrog and was very impressed that her brother was able to afford a beautiful apartment and furnish it tastefully with good-quality furnishings in such a short time. During her visit, Tonya appreciated Katya as a good cook who served tasty, abundant meals and desserts. Katya said that she hadn't prepared anything special to treat her visiting sister-in-law and that the food she served was just the regular meals that they had every day. When Tonya got home from her visit, she told her mother and father, "Kolya has found well-paid employment there; it allows him to live as a truly prosperous professional man." And she added, "He also has found a good wife who takes good care of the home and family."

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1. Russia, Eastern Ukraine.
 2. Tatyana, Antonina, Anna, and Olga.
 3. Alexander, Ivan, and Pyetr.
 4. Feminine spelling of the word “student” in Russian.
 5. Nickname for Yekateryna.
 6. Lower middle class.
 7. Railroad Street.
 8. Nickname for Varvara.
 9. Nickname for Mikhail.
 10. Nickname for Pavlina.



Learning to Be a Teacher

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

On the fifth of June, 1913, I graduated with a silver medal award from the First Women's Gymnasium of Slavyansk,¹ the secondary school for girls that my sisters and I had attended. I was eighteen years old. I made up my mind to become a teacher and enrolled in a one-year course of specialized studies that was offered at our gymnasium. I graduated from that course on the fifth of June, 1914 and received a certificate² qualifying me as an elementary school teacher of Russian and French and as an in-home tutor.



Antonina (Tonya) Gavriylovna Berezhnaya in the last Year of Gymnasium.

Slavyansk, Kharkovsky Province, Russia, 1913.



Antonina (Tonya) Gavriylovna Berezhnaya. Kharkov, Kharkovsky Province, Russia, May 31, 1918. Photo from Teacher of French Certificate. Photo crop by Howard A. Tillery

My father had a good customer, an officer by the name of Stotsky. He moved with his family to Slavyansk from Saint Petersburg, where his wife used to be a French teacher. My father asked her to talk to me and evaluate my skills. She was impressed with my French, and at her advice, I decided to specialize further and qualify to teach in a gymnasium.



Antonina (Tonya) Gavriylovna Berezhnaya and her baby-brother Pyetr (Petya), Gavriylovich Berezhnuy. Slavyansk, Kharkovsky Province, Russia, 1914.

During that summer, I tutored Madam Stotsky's son in Russian. In exchange, I took from her advanced French lessons in order to prepare myself for the entrance exams at the Lochvedskaya—Scolon Courses of Modern Foreign Languages in Petrograd (as Saint Petersburg was now renamed after the war with the Germans began). Madam Stotsky highly recommended the Courses, which were well known throughout the country.

In the fall of 1914, I departed for the city of Petrograd with money my father and my older sister Tanya provided me. She graduated from the gymnasium one year ahead of me and was now working locally at Kotlyarov's Print Shop and saving money

for her next year of study at a dental school in the city of Kharkov.

Madam Stotsky had given me a letter of recommendation and the address of one family she knew well, the family of a very wealthy French businessman who had his own company in the city of Petrograd. I departed in the fall, hoping to pass the entrance examination that was required before being accepted to the Courses.

According to Madam Stotsky's instructions, upon my arrival at the Alexandrovsky railroad station, I hired a *van'ka*, a coachman with a small carriage. This was the cheapest method of transportation from the station to the city and the most practical, considering that he would bring me and my big basket with my belongings directly to the door at Number 3 Gorokhovoy Street. He drove me down the entire length of Nyevsky Prospect and turned onto the street close to Palace Square, where the Tsar's palace was.

I handed the lady of the house the letter from Madam Stotsky. But she had been already notified that I was coming and was expecting my arrival. This Madam spoke only French and behaved with an air of great importance. She gave orders to the maids to take care of all my needs. They fed me right away and gave me a separate room. In it was a huge bed covered with a goose-feather quilt. For about a week, I stayed at their house; they fed me, and their servants took care of me until I found a place to live. The Courses were not far from there, in the center of the city on Nikolayevsky Street, a street that ran perpendicular to Nevsky Prospect.

Finding a room to rent was a very difficult task for students. Since I started at the Courses immediately upon my arrival, I had to search for a room late in the afternoon after my lessons ended. I decided to look first along streets located not too far from the Courses and began my search by walking down Nikolayevsky Street. I was looking for green papers that would be attached to the gates of the buildings if there were rooms within for rent. After a while, I found a green paper stating that a room was available on the second floor and that the stairs to its entrance were in the courtyard. As soon as I entered the gate, a huge dog jumped on me, placing his furry paws on my shoulders and barking in my face. I was struck with fear and was able only to whisper, "Doggy... Doggy, please..." A woman on the balcony

above called the dog off and invited me into her apartment. To calm me down, she gave me a glass of water. But I was so scared that I refused to look at the room.

The next day, I went searching on Vladimirovsky Street. There I found a very small, narrow room with a single bed, a chair, and a small table with a carafe of water on it. A Polish woman rented the room to me on the strict condition that there would be no visits from other students, which I agreed to sincerely. The place was convenient to the Courses; to get there I could take the streetcar that ran down Nevsky Prospect.

One afternoon, only a few weeks after I rented the room, the landlady was waiting for me at the door with a puzzled look on her face. She led me to my room. I saw a huge basket on my bed. Sitting on the chair was a girl from my gymnasium, a very nasty and unpleasant person with whom I never had a friendly relationship. I found out that my mother had given her my address, thinking to do me a favor by having a friend from my hometown to stay with me. The landlady did not allow her to stay and sent her away.

A short time after this incident, my landlady again showed me to my room while reproaching me for having visitors. I looked at the two women sitting on my bed and told her, "I don't even know who they are." This time my mother made for me another surprise by giving my address to one of her acquaintances, Mussya Skorkina, who in turn passed it on to a distant relative living in another town. The woman was bringing her daughter to the city to study and needed a place to stay until they could find her a room. This time the landlady told me to "get out."

The mother and her daughter, Zhenya, had another reference to a person in the workers' hamlet on the Vyborgsky side of the city, which was not far from her school, and they found her a room there. Since it was not easy to find another room immediately, I had no other choice—they convinced me to move in with Zhenya.

I lived there for the rest of the school year, though it was very far from my Courses, and it took me a long time to travel there each day, especially during the northern winter that was much colder there than in the Ukraine. I had to walk to Kalininsky Bridge, where I would take the streetcar going to Nyevesky Prospect. There I had to get out at Gostinny Dvor and transfer to

another streetcar going along Nevsky Prospect and get off on Nikolayevsky Street, and from there I walked the rest of the way to my Courses. I remember one windy day I got on the streetcar at Gostinny Dvor, and all the passengers were staring at me. Finally, one woman came up to me and told me that my cheek was frozen, and she began to warm it up with her mitten.

Zhenya was a nice girl, and we got along very well. She received lots of packages from her mother containing dried fruits that we chewed constantly while doing our homework assignments.

The eyeglasses I still wore from Slavyansk were so out of focus that I saw everything as if it was in a fog. Finally, I decided to have an eye doctor in the city check my eyes. I got new pince-nez eyeglasses that were kept in place by a spring that gripped the bridge of my nose. It took me a while to get used to them. Straight lines looked curved, and I was so insecure when walking that people tried to help me, assuming that I was almost blind.

But what a sensation I felt when I finally got used to them! Suddenly, for the first time in my life, I actually saw the world as it really was. Before, all people seemed to be so pretty to me. Now, I found that what I saw was not always beautiful. The faces of passersby acquired new life and meaning. Now I saw them clearly and as they were—some, old with wrinkled faces but pleasant and smiling; others, with wrinkles frozen in hardened, stone-like expressions staring indifferently at everyone; still others had ugly features and looked sad or bashful; some were covered with scars or just had intimidating and threatening expressions; some, of an indefinite age, were insignificantly plain and colorless; while others were young, full of joy, and radiant with life.

Now I could also see, instead of the milky-gray walls of buildings along the streets, the gracious palaces of the city in all their classical beauty, with all their architectural adornments. And I could finally see and admire all the luxurious display windows in the famous shops on Nevsky Prospect. I was so fascinated by their splendor that I often forgot about the time needed to get home before dark.

I had two other girlfriends, both students at the Courses, who entered into my life in Petrograd. One was Manya, a local resident who lived not far from the school. Both of her parents worked. I

used to walk with her after lessons, and on our way to her home, we would stop at the bakery to buy ready-to-bake dough and ingredients for *sago*, a kind of starch made from the piths of palm trees used in making puddings or pie fillings. Then my friend would bake a pie, which we shared with her teenage brother, or sometimes with her boyfriend, who was a student at the Medical Military Academy. Occasionally, the three of us went to Academy Park, where we could rent skates and skate on the pond with other students from the Academy and also from many other schools and Courses offered in that city.

The other student, Nadya, who befriended me was a companion to a rich old lady and lived with her in a huge house. Nadya loved to go to the theater and always knew what and where something interesting was playing and how to get tickets that were affordable to students. On the evenings when we went to the theater, she invited me to supper and for an overnight stay. One of our most memorable evenings was when we saw the ballet "Talisman" at the Maryinsky Theater. It was a benefit performance by the ballerina Ksheshynskaya and the famous dancer Vladimirov. My friend obtained tickets that were directly distributed to students at the palace where the famous ballerina lived.

Another memorable event occurred when she was lucky enough to get students' tickets to the Narodny Dom, a popular theater, where the famous Russian bass singer, Shalyapin, performed in the opera "Faust." Students could purchase inexpensive, non-numbered tickets for the gallery. In order to get the best seats, students had to arrive very early and wait until the large doors opened. Then they would all run up the wide, steep stairs trying to find good seats. That evening we were lucky to get seats in the first row of the gallery—not only could we hear, but we could also see the performance of Shalyapin. What a voice he had! It was an unforgettable experience.

Petrograd at that time was a center of learning, and students came there from all parts of Russia. Most students belonged to fellowship groups named after their province. I did not belong to any specific group, but I went to many cultural events organized by several groups. All meetings were open to any student who wanted to attend. I remember very vividly the evening I attended a lecture organized by the students from Chernigov belonging to

a Chernigovsky Fellowship group, where the young poet, Mayakovsky, who was a sensation at that time, read his poems. He made his onstage entrance with his back to the audience. He wore an unusual, strange outfit—a wide, long black mantle with large sleeves. When he recited, he didn't look at the audience, but somewhere beyond it, turning to one or the other side of the stage, looking up at the ceiling or down on the floor.

I liked the student life, and I liked my professors—they were all very good; especially excellent was Professor Polyvanov, who taught Phonetics. He captivated student audiences during beautiful lectures that he filled with melodious, phonetic sounds. I still remember, that during the examination, he praised me for my ability in pronunciation and gave me a very good grade. Another very remarkable professor was Monsieur Dean, whose lectures on World Literature were sprinkled with colorful recitations from the classics.

In the summer of 1915, the war with Germany had already begun. Before I went home for summer vacation, there were rumors in the workers' hamlet on the Vyborsky side of the city about the unrest caused by revolutionaries and their sympathizers. There were numerous strikes, and workers gathered for secret meetings. Workers in the hamlet talked about many political ideas that I could not understand. One thing was certain: life in the city was becoming insecure. Therefore, when I went home for summer vacation, I decided not to return to Petrograd but to find another school closer to home.

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1. From a Certificate, "Attestat," 1913, private collection of Olga Gladky Verro.
 2. From a Certificate, "Attestat," 1914, private collection of Olga Gladky Verro.



My Sister Tanya

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

My sister Tanya¹ was born on the twelfth of January, 1884, in Slavyansk. Tanya was only one year older than I and two years older than our sister Nyusya. Although all three of us attended the same gymnasium, Tanya was more mature, and she had her own-age girlfriends who lived not far from us. Therefore she acted toward Nyusya and me as a big sister, and she didn't play with us.

Being an older daughter, she used to help our mother cook, and she especially liked to bake all kinds of sweet breads, cookies, and cakes. She also helped our mother look after the younger children. Tanya also learned very early all types of embroidery; she was particularly skillful in cross-stitch, white satin-stitch embroidery on blouses and lingerie, and openwork embroidery on table and bed linen. While still in a gymnasium, Tanya began to prepare for herself a beautifully embroidered trousseau. One could say without reservation that she had all the skills that at that time were appreciated in a good housewife.

Beginning from childhood, in her youth and womanhood, Tanya was the prettiest girl in our family. She inherited many of our father's physical traits. She was tall, had long, wavy dark-brown hair, an oval face, smooth, slightly tanned skin, large brown and smiling eyes outlined with neatly shaped eyebrows and long eyelashes. Her facial traits were so well proportioned that they could be called classical.¹

As she was growing up, Tanya blossomed into a beautiful young woman, and in the last years of gymnasium, she had many admirers and was very selective in allowing young men to court her. She had a very dear girlfriend, Marusya Sidorenko,² who was in the same class with her in the gymnasium and who lived a little bit farther up from our house on the other side of the street. In the evening the two of them used to walk with their admirers back and forth on the sidewalk of Kharkovsky Street. Although both

were good students, they didn't have great ambition for a career but began very early to plan for a good marriage.



Tatyana (Tanya) Gavriyllovna Berezhnaya and her gymnasium girlfriend, Alexandra (Shura) Pancratyeva. Slavyansk, Kharkovsky Province, Russia, 1916.

When Tanya graduated from gymnasium, she found employment in Kotlyarov's Printing House, not far from where we lived on the corner of Kharkovsky and Zheleznodorozhnaya streets. With the money she earned she was purchasing additional trousseau items and was helping me when I went to study in Petrograd. She also began to seriously select a future husband among her admirers.

One of her first admirers was a young local lawyer. I still remember that he had a blind brother, whom he used to bring with him. While he was walking with Tanya on the sidewalk, his brother sat on the bench outside our house with Nyusya and me. But this admirer did not last long; he found another girl to marry, probably because her father was a rich merchant in town.

Then there was one of our father's customers, a timber merchant, and a man much older than Tanya, who courted her for a while and wanted to marry her. I don't remember exactly what did happen to him, but he disappeared during the revolution.

Then one day, a brother came to visit Dasha Kulish, a young girl who attended gymnasium with us. Lyenya³ Kulish rented a room in the second house from our father. Their father was a small landowner in the neighboring village. Lyenya, who was tall,

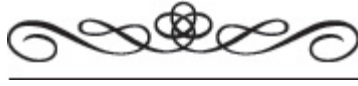
blond, and very good-looking, began to court Tanya. She fell in love with him and decided he was the one she would marry. In addition to being from a wealthy family, he was also madly in love with Tanya, and soon they became engaged to be married. As was customary, they had already exchanged wedding rings, and he had entrusted to Tanya for safekeeping his ancestral wedding ring. Everything was set up for an early wedding.

All this happened at the time when the revolution and all its atrocities had come close to home. Incited by revolutionaries, the peasants in Lyenya's native village took the law into their own hands. Blinded by the prospect of taking the land from the landlord, a mob of muzhiks burst into Kulish's estate. They attacked and killed the old landowner, Lyenya's father. When Lyenya came to his father's defense, they brutally beat him, then dragged him to the river, and drowned him.

This tragic episode ended Tanya's engagement. During a period of mourning for her fiancé, she had time to rethink the priorities in her life. It was a time of traumatic change in the whole system of the country and in the goals that the young women were planning for their future. As had many of her girlfriends, Tanya decided to prepare herself for a future career and put her marriage plans on hold. Her choice was to enroll in medical dentistry courses the next school year, and she continued to work in the printing house, saving money for that purpose.

That summer, when I came home for vacation, I decided not to return to Petrograd, which was boiling with revolutionary movement. Tanya and I agreed to go together to the nearest big city, Kharkov, where we both could attend courses of our choice. I was to continue to attend special courses required for a teacher's certificate in French language; Tanya was to start her first year of medical courses in dentistry.

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1. See Photo of Berezhnoy Family in 1910 in the chapter "My Little Sister Natasha."
 2. See Photo in this chapter "Tanya with Friend" in 1914.
 3. Lyenya—nickname for name "Leonid."



Students in Kharkov

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

In the fall of 1915, my sister, Tanya, was to begin her study at the dental school in Kharkov. Since I decided not to return to Petrograd because of the unrest in that city, Madam Stotsky suggested that in Kharkov there were very well-known M. A. Stats Pedagogical Courses of Modern Languages, so I enrolled there that school year. Tanya had worked for almost two years and saved some of the money needed to pay for her studies. Our father financed the rest of our living expenses and tuition. We were expected to live modestly on our budget without sacrificing essential needs.

Both our schools were located in the center of the city. The Dental School was on Sumskaya Street and the Courses of Modern Languages was on the corner of Sumskaya and Mironosetsky, where Mironosetsky Square was.

We found a room somewhat distant from the city's center because rent there was less expensive. My sister also found a girl to share our room who was enrolled in her school. Our roommate, Lyudmila, was a very pretty blonde girl from a Greek family that came from the town of Taganrog on the western shore of the Azov Sea. Our landlady who sublet to us the room was a Siberian woman, and she lived in the apartment with her domestic servant, Ulyasha.

Travel to and from our schools by streetcar took a long time, and so we did not have much time left for recreation. By the time we got home from school, it was already evening. After supper we were busy studying, and in the morning, we had to get up early in order to be on time at our schools.

Tanya, as an older daughter, had learned to cook well at home; she was especially good at baking all kinds of cookies and cakes. So, we entrusted her with our money and with the preparation of meals. We pitched in with the other chores. She then gave us from the kitty our lunch money and money for other occasional

expenses.

On cold winter evenings, we shared the events of the day with each other, and I was the one who entertained them with fortune telling. I predicted the future with cards, the trick that I learned as a young girl from my paternal grandmother, Babushka Anna, when she came from the village to visit us in my father's home. I was not an experienced fortune teller, but I was a good actress with lots of imagination and always told them what each of them wanted to hear: "The cards are showing that you will soon meet an attractive young man. The two of you would fall madly in love with each other!"

My reputation as a fortuneteller improved considerably when I predicted that Ulyasha's husband would come home soon, and he, indeed, came home in a few days after that. Of course, he was recovering in a hospital after being wounded on the Front, and she had been expecting him any day anyway, so that was not hard to foretell from the cards!

The three years I spent in Kharkov were less eventful than the single year I lived in Petrograd. And the signs of revolution were slow to undermine the lives of the citizens of Kharkov.

The students at our schools were mostly girls from Kharkovsky province and from the city. Most of their families were from the lower ranks of government bureaucracy, small merchants, shopkeepers, and tradesmen. They had established a comfortable way of life and financial security for themselves and their families. They built that way of life with years of perseverance and honest work, and their loyalty to the Tsar and Russia remained strong. Any disruption of the established order in the country meant a threat to their way of life and an uncertain future.

In the beginning, the events that happened in large cities far away in the North of Russia seemed a remote and most likely a temporary phenomenon to us young women students. It was something that could never reach us and disturb our way of life. For a period of time we continued to live our normal, everyday student lives, almost entirely insulated from what was happening in the rest of the country.

Kharkov was a small city, compared to Petrograd; it did not offer much contact with students from other schools, and there were no specific cultural or recreational activities for students. We

had a few friends whom we met on occasion. My sister Tanya's girlfriend from gymnasium, Shura Pankrat'yeva, and her brother Vassya, who studied at a technical school, visited us often. I had two other friends, both older than I. One friend owned a ladies' hat shop located in the big new building almost across the street from the Courses. She took care of the customers and all the business affairs, and her sister, who was a very skillful *modiste*, created beautiful hats.

I had known this woman previously in Slavyansk, when she visited her gentleman friend, a Polish man, who rented an apartment from my father on the second floor of our white brick house. This same gentleman had financed her hat shop and a nice apartment. The gentleman friend visited her quite often, both for business and for pleasure. He usually brought her huge bags of candies and ordered all kinds of cakes, which she shared with me after he was gone. She was short and plump, but an attractive woman, always well-dressed and wearing fashionable hats. She had some other admirers and enjoyed going out with them, especially to the theaters.

When she found out that I was studying to become a French teacher, she asked me to give her lessons in exchange for lunch or dinner, which was cooked by her servant. The food was well prepared and very good; especially tasty were the *pirozhky* with meat or other fillings—they reminded me of those made by my mother. I soon understood that she was not truly interested in learning French—she really wanted a companion. Occasionally I stayed overnight at her home when she invited me for supper and then to the theater, where she always found somebody to socialize with. By keeping her company, I was able to save some money from my allowance, which came in handy for other expenses.

The other older friend was a student at the Courses, and she lived in a big apartment not far from there. I remember only that her last name was Antakolenko. She was from a rich family, well educated, with very refined manners, and was an aspiring poet. To hide her age, she used a lot of makeup, which women did not commonly use back then. Sometimes she invited me to visit her after school. Usually, we had supper, and then she played piano and read her poetry to me, as she wanted to share it with someone who could appreciate it. Influenced by her, I started to write poetry, too. Sometimes she organized evening dance parties at her

home for us students and served refreshments of pastries and tea. She also invited some of our teachers to those parties.

That was when I fell in love for the first time—with my teacher of logic, lecturer Mezhlauk. He was by nationality a Latvian and was a somewhat eccentric young man. He had a peculiar habit, upon entering the classroom, of pulling out his neatly folded handkerchief and wiping his lips.

I liked him very much. I was falling in love with him but could not figure out how to let him know about it. One day, when I had saved some money, I went to the florist and bought a potted flowering white lilac. I paid the Red Hat, as the errand-boys who wore red hats were called, and gave him my teacher's address, but I did not put my name on the card. At an interval of a few days, I twice sent flowers to Mezhlauk. The third time, I gave him the name of our roommate, Lyudmila, so his reply could be mailed to our post office box. His answer was very short: "I have already received three plants from my kind friend, but I don't know who she is..." After that I stayed behind several times after his lectures to ask him some questions on logic. Finally, he gave me one of his books to read, and in it I found his photograph. I kept it.

One day, my poetess friend gave an evening dance party. The young women were required to wear men's clothing. I borrowed my costume from Vassya, our friend Shura's brother. Our teacher, Mezhlauk, was also invited, but he was late, and I was disappointed because there were very few men at the party, and the women had to dance with each other. But finally, my white knight arrived and asked me to dance with him.

At the end of the evening, he asked me how I would be getting home. And, when I told him that I traveled on the streetcar, he suggested that he would take the *van'ka* and would accompany me home. We had a nice evening ride in the carriage. He came into our apartment and met my sister Tanya and our roommate, Lyudmila.

Shortly after that, he was called up for military service and was sent to the Western Front, where the Russian Army was defending against the German invasion. I had received only one letter from him, in which he notified me that he'd been wounded and was writing from a hospital. I wrote him back but never received an answer. Later, I read in the newspaper that he died

after being wounded on the front. Thus, my first romance had a very tragic end.

The course of study at the Courses of Modern Languages was very comprehensive and, in order to succeed, students had to put in many hours of intensive homework. During my three years of study, I had to take the required subjects of Psychology; Logic; Pedagogy; History of Education; School Hygiene; French Grammar; Contemporary and Classic Literature and History; and Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages. In addition, I had several elective subjects that included Latin and the History of World Literature.

At the end of the three years of study—I received one year of credits for my studies in Petrograd—in May 1918, I took and passed the required examination given by the Government Commission. I received a Certificate¹ giving me the title of Secondary School Teacher of French, which I would hold after I had completed the six months of required supervised teaching in a state or community secondary school.

In May 1918, I graduated from the M. A. Stats Pedagogical Courses of Modern Languages in Kharkov.¹ We had a formal graduation ceremony followed by a reception and an evening ball. There were only a few young men to dance with—they were just starting to return home after The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed in the beginning of March, ending the war—so the young women had to dance with each other. That's how we celebrated the end of our studies and the end of our carefree student life. We knew that, with the tumultuous situation in our country, tomorrow we would face the harsh reality and begin to earn our living.

1. See the Appendix, "Documents with Translations"—A Certificate of Pedagogical Courses—*Svidyetyelstvo*, May 31, 1918.



Starting Out in Life

By Antonina G. Gladky

I couldn't find employment in Kharkovsky province and decided to do my supervised teaching in Slavyansk and departed for home. Immediately, I applied to the Ministry of People's Education of Yekaterinoslavsky province for a teaching position in the secondary school.

By this time, the wave of revolution had engulfed all parts of Russia, including the Ukraine. The unrest was already reaching the smaller cities, towns, hamlets, and villages and was sowing seeds of fear and uncertainty in the minds of people. I started my adult life during hard times—a turning point in the history of Russia—at the turbulent years of revolution and civil war.

Brought up with a spirit of morality and having received a solid education, I was confident in my abilities as a teacher. The enthusiasm of youth gave me hope that I could find my place and be useful in the field of education in the new Russia, in whatever form it should emerge from these hell-broken-loose events.

At the end of summer 1918, I received a list of several places of employment from which I could choose. I applied for a teaching position in the newly opened gymnasium in the small hamlet Nikitovka adjacent to a large railroad station by the same name. Shortly after, in the fall of 1918, I received confirmation to my first place of employment for the 1918–1919 school year. There I started my teaching career as a teacher of Russian, in the elementary classes, and French, in the secondary classes.

I arrived at the station of Nikitovka and stepped out onto the platform with a big wicker basket containing all my belongings that included my French and Russian textbooks and a few classic literature books. I found a room to rent from a Jewish family. They'd recently added this room to their house and made a separate entrance, which I liked because it gave me more privacy than I had renting rooms as a student.

The new gymnasium in Nikitovka was of co-ed type, for both

boys and girls. It was opened after many efforts made by the local population and mostly with the Jewish community's funds. Nikitovka's well-to-do Jews collected money also from all surrounding hamlets, whose residents could benefit from the new school by sending their children there for the secondary studies.

The number of students enrolled in the newly opened school was small, especially in the highest class, where I taught French. In that class there were only ten students, six Jewish children, three girls and three boys, as well as four Christian boys. I still remember the names of some of my students: Vadim Kuzenko, son of Yelysey Ivanovich Kuzenko, the Assistant Stationmaster; Orest Gladky, son of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky, the Senior telegrapher at the station's telegraph office, and Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich Gladky, the History teacher in the Railroad elementary school; and Adrian Volkov and Yasha Malobrodsky, both sons of railway employees.

As a young teacher, I was shy around my older students, sixteen-year-old boys who were taller than I and not at all timid in making ambiguous comments about my appearance. They became bolder after noticing that I was easily embarrassed and blushed profusely at their seemingly casual remarks. They spoke among themselves in subdued voices, but loud enough to make sure I heard them.

I wore to school my best half-circle style, long, green, silk taffeta skirt, and a white lawn blouse decorated with pin tucks and a narrow stand-up collar ruffled at the edges. My wavy hair (I used strips of cloth around which I curled it overnight) was tied at the nape of my neck with a huge green silk bow.

I was especially annoyed, when, as I moved around the classroom, my skirt made a rustling sound, and someone in the classroom would hiss, "Sh-sh-sh-sh, sh-sh-sh." Then, from the other side of the room another student would admonish the first one in a louder tone, "Sh-sh-sh, be quiet!" And all of them would chuckle, covering the mouths with their hands or hiding their faces behind the textbooks. And I, in a very strict manner, would quiet them down by saying, "That's enough! Let's get back to our lesson!"

The Director of the gymnasium was Boris Alekseyevich Polyevoy. He was a very kind and likable man. There was mutual respect and understanding between him and all the teachers.

Students loved him for his fairness and also because he mingled with them before and after school and during recesses between classes.

His wife, Zinayda Petrovna, who was originally from Crimea, taught Natural Science. She was skinny, dark-complexioned, with black hair rolled in a large bun high on top of her head. Being a chain-smoker, her fingers and teeth were the rusty-yellow color of tobacco. The Polyevoy's had a five-year-old daughter, Alochka, whom they adored. They had a servant who took care of the child and did all household chores, but most important, she was a good cook.

Then there was Ira Victorovna Adler, a teacher of German in the upper classes, who became my best friend. She was of German origins and an excellent teacher. The four of us, Boris Alekseyevich, Zinayda Petrovna, Ira Victorovna, and I became very good friends during my first year of teaching in Nikitovka.

During this time the civil war was just beginning in the Ukraine. The authority in Yekaterinoslavsky province changed hands several times—from Whites to Reds and back from Reds to Whites. Many young men and boys were volunteering in the White Army, while some were drafted by the Reds. Many families abandoned all their belongings and departed somewhere—nobody knew where. They were escaping the Reds, who, everywhere they were arriving, threatened loudly to “settle the old scores” with “bourgeois” and with “exploiters.” And in those two categories could fit anybody. It was enough for somebody to point a finger at you and say, “He was...” and you would instantly become the “enemy of the people.” There was no law, justice, or due process.

All the rumors about the brutalities of the Reds produced a panic in the population—all felt to be in danger. People feared for their lives, even those who'd never harmed anyone and who lived decently but had the “misfortune” to own their house, or have a good employment position, or were clergymen, or owned shops, or small businesses. Most of the students in our gymnasium were from families of this kind. Many local students left with their families; others, from out of town, fearing troubled times, returned home to be with their families. Some entire classes at the gymnasium became deserted, or so small that they had to be consolidated. The school days were often irregular, depending

upon what was going on in the hamlet after receiving the latest news from the station of Nikitovka.

The population depended on the news brought by the railroad employees arriving on the trains from different locations and from telegraph messages that were coming from other railroad stations. They knew where the Reds, the Whites, and the Greens were, who'd overpowered whom, who occupied such and such town, hamlet, or a village. The situation was so fluid and changed so quickly that only a firsthand source could give the people some reliable information on which they could base their decisions—to stay put or to run, and in what direction. One thing was clear: people ran away from the Reds toward the areas that were in the hands of Whites and away from the battlefields.



The Ukrainian Folk Dance Hopak

By Antonina G. Gladky

After the Bolsheviks took power in Nikitovka, the name of the secondary school where I worked was changed from Gymnasium to Seven-Years Common Trade School,¹ but great changes in the program and teaching methods were not made at that time. The major subjects of study remained the same, and only the course in religion was eliminated right away; religion was declared to be the “opiate of the people.” In the beginning, the director and the teachers remained in the positions they’d held before the Bolsheviks took over the government. For some time, the school continued to function normally thanks to the dedication of the teachers, who were not being paid.

However, soon after the beginning of the new school year, the Seven-Years Common Trade School closed its doors for lack of funds and fuel. During those difficult times after our school was closed, Boris Alyexeyevich Polyevoy, the former director of the school, and his wife, Zinayda Pyetrovna, a teacher of mathematics, suggested that it would be more convenient to live together in their three-room apartment and make it easier to provide for heating, food, and rent. So, Irina Victorovna Adler, a teacher of German, and I moved into one of the rooms of their apartment. There also lived their seven-year-old daughter, Alochka, and their former cook, Poly, who helped with the chores and cooking.

The other teachers from our school, teachers of geography and art, also decided to live together for the same reasons. They moved into another two-room apartment. Zinayda Pyetrovna liked to visit them in the evenings and stayed there until very late. Boris Alexeyevich and I would wait for her, often standing near the doors to our rooms and talking until long after Alochka had been put to bed.

Later that school year, all the women teachers from our school went to work in the Railroad School. There, the conditions were somewhat better. The Railroad Cooperative supplied the teachers with some food, and a meager salary was paid quite regularly. After the women found work, Boris Alexeyevich, for the time being, stayed home with his daughter and cleaned the house so diligently, that when we returned from school, everything was shining. Polya was a very good cook and always managed to prepare tasty meals from whatever we were able to get in the Railroad Cooperative or bartered for with clothing.

One day, Boris Alexeyevich went to Gorlovka for some reason; when he returned home, he got very sick with a high fever. It was, unfortunately, a short and fatal illness, which the doctor diagnosed as cerebral meningitis. After his death, we women continued to live together in a collective.

It needs to be said that, for a short period when the situation was unsettled as to who was in power, Whites or Reds, the majority of the railroad workers and employees were not starving yet. Because they were too important for the Reds, they were allowed to keep their cows, pigs, and poultry. And by using their right for free travel, they were coupling freight cars to any train and traveling to places where they could barter clothing for foodstuff. Their children did not feel hunger, which was already decimating thousands at that time in Russia. Moreover, well fed, they were seeking fun and entertainment, and many of them, girls and boys, wanted to stay after school, socialize, and dance. One of the teachers usually stayed to supervise them.

I was a great admirer of dancing, and one day when I stayed with the children after school, I showed them the Ukrainian folk dance *hopachek*.² The children were delighted and pleaded with me to teach them to dance well. Interrupting each other, they were telling me, "We will pay you!"

"We will bring you everything you want."

"Bread..."

"Butter..."

"Potatoes..."

"Onions..."

This episode started our "dancing school for youth." Zinayda Pyetrovna Polyevaya played the piano. Her skinny long fingers slid on the keys, playing "Waves of the Amur River." And I, in a

flared green silk skirt—the only one that was left, as all others had been bartered for food—and wearing a big green bow in my hair, was fluttering like a butterfly and beating time in a lively manner, “One-two-three, one-two-three...”

The cheerful red-cheeked young girls and well-built young boys were learning how to move gracefully with the waltz.

But the most popular dance was *hopachek*.² The boys danced tirelessly, squatting and hopping, and the girls, provocatively flirting, were whirling around them—once coming closer, then going farther—and the others were beating time by clapping their hands. There seemed to be no limit to their fun.

Irina Victorovna Adler collected fees for the lessons—all kinds of foodstuff: bread, cereals, salt, sugar, oil, and vegetables. The onions were especially appreciated. Polya, who cooked our meals, was telling us that with onions she could make anything smell and taste appetizing.

This way, during very hard times, by living in a collective, we were able to survive the famine and stock up some reserves for the lean days to come.

It is impossible to forget this “hungry *hopak*,” as we used to call it, and we remembered it often after the famine was over. But mostly, we blessed our old schools, which besides giving us solid foundations in our special areas of knowledge, taught us to play piano and dance. Who could not have anticipated that these skills would become so handy in one of the most difficult times in our lives?

Remembering my past now, I shake my head and wonder—how remarkable this Ukrainian folk dance *hopak* is! Later in my life, I met another person—very important, prominent person³ in the history of Russia—who, for very different reasons and under unique circumstances, had danced it in the uncertain moments in his life to ingratiate the favors of a dictator.

1. See “Starting Out In Life.”

2. Diminutive name for *hopak*, the Ukrainian folk dance.

3. Nikita S. Khrushchev.



The Origins of the Gladky Family

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

The origins of the Gladky family can be traced to the village of Alexeyevka in the Alexeyevsky rural district, of the Bakhmut provincial district, that was then under the jurisdiction of the Ekaterinoslavsky province in southern Russia.

Alexeyevka was a village where the land belonged not to a landlord, but to the free peasants. A long time ago when the borderlands of Russia called *okraina*, the outer region of the country, were subject to frequent invasions by the various neighboring tribes, the Crown was interested in establishing the stability of the region by populating it with loyal subjects. The ancestors of peasant families in Alexeyevka were sent there from Russia as free peasants, not as serfs belonging to any landowner. In reward for settling along the country's borders, they received large tracts of land from the Crown.

From the time the free peasants settled in Alexeyevka, they worked for themselves; they tilled the soil and cultivated all kinds of crops: wheat, rye, oats, millet, corn, and sunflowers. The rich soil, called *chernozem*, or "black earth," characteristic of southern Russia, provided plentiful crops, and the peasants lived in prosperity there.

Ownership of the land in that region passed from father to sons by subdivision. Because of the generous size of the original parcels of allotted land, several generations later all the families of Alexeyevka still had large parcels that could be subdivided and passed to several future generations. Around their cottages the peasants cultivated big vegetable and fruit gardens; and in their barns they kept cows, pigs, and all kinds of poultry—chickens, ducks, and geese. The peasants were not only self-sufficient in grains, produce, sunflower oil, meat, and dairy products, they also took an abundance of them to the regional market in

Bakhmut, and the government collected its share of the grain in tollage from them.

Each family had several horses, which were needed in order to perform their farm chores: plowing the fields, hauling crops, hay, and straw, and transporting grains, produce, meat, and poultry to the market. All the families in the village of Alexeyevka were well provided for. Year-round their pantries, earth cellars, barns, haylofts, and woodsheds were full. But they worked hard to achieve it.

Since families in the village had their own land, they didn't use hired farmhands. Instead, all members in each extended family worked together, taking turns working the fields for each individual family. Men and women had well-defined, specific tasks; the youth worked alongside adults, and children started very young to give a helping hand. During the peak of planting and harvesting seasons, everyone worked from dawn to dusk until all the seeds were sown or all the crops were harvested in each family's field.

When an illness or other misfortune occurred in their or in a neighbor's family, the others in the village pitched in to help for as long as it was needed. Widows, orphans, and the elderly were also taken care of by their extended families. In this way, the villagers protected and maintained the prosperity of each family and of the whole village for generations.

Because it was a prosperous village, Alexeyevka had a nice church that was dutifully attended by all peasant families on Sundays and holidays. And, as was customary in those days, the church was the center of village social life and the repository of registries of marriages, births, and deaths. The clergyman also gave lessons to the peasant boys, teaching them to read the Bible and New Testament. All fathers sent their sons to him at least for as long as it took them to learn all the prayers.

Ownership of the land, the economic security of their families, the thriving community, and their close ties with their extended families kept many generations of the original settlers from moving away from Alexeyevka. There were so many families with the same surname that the peasants had to invent a way to distinguish between them. In addition to their first, patronymic, and family surnames, they were also given a distinct nickname that often referred to a physical or behavioral characteristic or

some other particular trait.

Among the original families that long ago had settled in the village of Alexeyevka was a family with the surname of Gladky. The Gladkys became a large extended family, and many had not only the same family name but also the same patronymic and first names, which prompted the addition of the nicknames.

In the first half of the 1800s, in Alexeyevka, lived the free peasant Timofey Gladky, nicknamed Trigubenko, which meant "triple lips." This distinctive family trait passed from generation to generation with somebody in the family having very wide, protruding lips. Timofey tilled the soil and worked the land as all peasants in the village did. It is known that he had a family, a wife and several children. However, very little of his personal or family life was known to future generations of Gladkys who descended from Timofey's son Makar, who moved from the village early in his life and maintained very little contact with his original family.



Makar Timofeyevich Gladky

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

My grandfather, Makar Timofeyevich Gladky, was born in 1825 in the village Alexeyevka, in the Bakhmut district of Ekaterinoslavsky province in southern Russia. His father, Timofey Gladky, was a free peasant who owned and cultivated a large parcel of land that he had inherited from his father. From an early age Makar worked alongside his father, mother, and brothers and sisters in the fields, as was customary in those days in peasant families. In the winter months his father allowed him to attend lessons given at the church by the *Batyushka*, where he learned prayers and how to read Holy Scriptures.

In 1846, Makar was drafted into military service and served the full term for a soldier. Very little is known about his life in Alexeyevka, his childhood, his brothers and sisters, or about his life as a soldier, because Makar was not a talkative man and didn't share much about his past with his children or grandchildren. What is known about his family comes mostly from the recollections of his sons and grandsons, who on rare occasions visited the relatives in the village of Alexeyevka.

When Makar came home in 1866, after twenty years of military service, he had fallen out of the habit and training of farming, and so moved away from his native village. With the passing of time, he lost close contact with the rest of the family that remained in the village.

Makar Timofeyevich Gladky took the opportunity offered to men discharged from military service to be placed in a civil service on the government jobs. He was hired by the Southern Railway as a switchman for the railway switch-point at the station of Nikitovka. The station was located not at a great distance from his native village of Alexeyevka, and about twenty-five miles from the district town of Bakhmut.

In the network of the Southern Railway, the station of Nikitovka was a large junction for several major railway lines.

There, trains passed from the far North—from Saint Petersburg and Moscow—to the South, to the Caucasus—and had connections there with trains going East and West. Two main lines went from Kharkov—one of them, the North-Donetsky Line, went through Liman, and the other one, the Southern Line, went through Slavyansk to Lozovaya. From there it branched off to still another line going to Militopol and Crimea. Other lines went to Ocheretyno, Papasnaya, and Rostov-on-Don, and from there connected to more lines going to Taganrog and to the Caucasus. Besides the main lines there were local routes, one of which went to the hamlet of Mercury Mines.

Adjoining the station of Nikitovka was a workers' hamlet of the same name. It was inhabited by workers in the dolomite and cement plants that were located on the far side of the hamlet, away from the railroad station. On one side of the hamlet that led toward the fields, there was a steam mill that ground grain for all neighboring villages.

Makar Timofeyevich's job was not a complicated one, but it required self-discipline, responsibility, and concentration on specific tasks. His job was to take care of one railway switch-point. He stayed on duty for eight hours in a tiny wooden cabin that had room only for a wooden bench, a small iron stove with its pipe sticking out of a windowpane, and a wide windowsill that served him as a table.

He was responsible for maintaining the railway switch in good working order, for keeping it well greased with a heavy black oil, or *mazut*, that made the heavy switch lever easier to shift. The switch lever held the rails when they were moved from one track to another. Makar Timofeyevich had to move the switch manually according to schedule or upon special instructions from the Stationmaster. He needed to know the meaning of all railroad signals made with signal flags and signal horns, as well as the procedures of giving instructions to and receiving them from locomotive engineers.

The job was sometimes lonely, but it fit well the character of Makar Timofeyevich, who by nature was not a talkative man and didn't mind working alone. Still, exchanging greetings and news with locomotive engineers and the conductors of passing trains brightened his workday. And occasionally he had a chance to talk with the crews of freight trains as they waited on the service

tracks for a passenger train to move ahead of them on its scheduled time.

Close to the railway station, along the rail tracks, on land belonging to the Southern Railway, stretched rows of apartment houses built for railway workers and employees. Like all Southern Railway workers of lower rank, Makar Timofeyevich received, rent-free, one very large room in one of these apartment houses. The room had a built-in brick stove and served both as a kitchen and a bedroom. And, like all railway workers and employees, he also had other free benefits: coal and wood for heating and cooking; petroleum for lighting; winter and summer uniforms; and some free train tickets.

Makar Timofeyevich inherited many physical traits from his Gladky ancestors. He was taller than average but was not as broad-shouldered as one would expect for his size. He had a natural dark complexion, and dark-brown eyes and hair.

After twenty years of military service in which a soldier's appearance was prescribed by regulations, he got used to it and didn't change it in his civilian life. He kept his short soldier's haircut and plainly trimmed beard and moustache. He also maintained a straight posture and soldier's gait.

As a railroad worker, he wore a railway uniform specific to his service job of switchman. It consisted of a black suit and cap, both made of wool broadcloth in the winter and cotton twill in the summer. Both uniforms had distinctive red piping, a badge on their collars, and a cockade on their caps to indicate rank.

After settling into his job, Makar Timofeyevich decided that it was time for him to find the right woman and get married.



Makar Timofeyevich's Marriage

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

When Makar Timofeyevich Gladky decided to get married, he didn't go to his village to choose a peasant girl but began instead to travel on his days off to the town of Bakhmut in his search for the right woman. It didn't take him too long to meet Yelena Danilovna (no one in the family remembered her maiden name). Although Yelena Danilovna was considerably younger than he was, right from their first meeting, she evaluated Makar Timofeyevich as a good candidate for marriage—he had a secure railroad job and was submissive to her whims.

Compared to her husband, Yelena Danilovna seemed short, though she was only slightly less than average height. Her long, straight, dark-brown hair was parted in the middle, combed back and twisted into a tight knot held in place with many small hairpins. She wore the plain clothes customary for folks-women living in a small provincial town. They consisted of dark, long, gathered skirts, plain blouses made of cotton fabrics with small colorful, floral prints, and a light kerchief that she occasionally wore on her head. In the winter, she wore a long, dark coat with quilted lining and to cover her head a heavy woolen shawl that she tied around her neck.

Yelena Danilovna never had a formal education, but she learned well to count money and knew how to recite all the prayers because she attended church regularly. Like all town dwellers, she spoke Russian with a southern accent and mixed in a few Ukrainian words and phrases in her speech. Although she was a town dweller, her manners and deportment were typical of women of common origin. In the eyes of Makar Timofeyevich, who was a simple man, Yelena Danilovna was just the right kind of woman for him. And they got married after a short courtship.

But very soon after their wedding, he found out Yelena

Danilovna's negative traits, which later became known to the entire family. She had an obstinate and stubborn character, and she dominated her husband, ordering him about in very unsubtle ways. In his twenty years of military service, Makar Timofeyevich was used to receiving all kinds of orders. And, as a good soldier, he didn't put too much importance on the unreasonable demands of his shrewish wife. Without answering back, he would just wave his hand to show that he was letting her have her own way. He found it to be an easy way to maintain peace with his wife.

Makar Timofeyevich and Yelena Danilovna Gladky had five children. The two oldest sons, Fyodor and Pyetr, didn't have any other siblings until they finished elementary school. Then, in 1875, the year Makar Timofeyevich retired at the compulsory for railroad workers age of fifty, their third son, Mikhail, was born. A few years later, their only daughter, Maria, and then their youngest son, Pavel, were born.

All five children attended the elementary school in the hamlet of Nikitovka. At that time there was no secondary school there, so all their children, except Pavel, learned further on their own and on the job by starting in their teens at the station's office of Nikitovka.

After retirement, Makar Timofeyevich received a railway pension from the government. And, like all retired railroad workers, he continued to receive most of the benefits that he had while working: the rent-free, large room where his family lived; free coal and wood for heating and cooking; petroleum for lighting, and some free train tickets. The only benefit he lost was the winter and summer uniforms that Railway issued every year, but he had plenty of his old ones left to wear.

Although not too many details about the family life of Makar Timofeyevich and Yelena Danilovna were passed to their grandchildren, some interesting episodes were recounted often about Yelena Danilovna's sister, who was much older than Yelena.

She became famous in the family because of some funny and some tragic incidents that children remembered about their aunt. She lived in the town of Bakhmut but often visited her sister's family in Nikitovka. To save money, she didn't take the train, but walked twenty-five miles even in her old age. She also had a very peculiar habit of sharpening the kitchen knives on the wooden

stairs of their apartment, and nobody could convince her that wood would not sharpen a knife.

Another memorable, but tragic, event that happened to their aunt was during the big flood of 1907–1908 that produced lots of damage in that region of the country. The small river Bakhmutka suddenly overflowed overnight, taking by surprise the people living close to the river where the aunt's home was located.

As was usual for the elderly, she slept on the low stove-couch. When her house was flooded and swept away by the water, she didn't have a chance to escape and drowned, and her body was never found. According to some family members, she was more than a hundred years old when she died, and some relatives even asserted that she was one hundred and fourteen years old.

As their five children grew older, Yelena Danilovna complained that they needed more space for the family, but on her husband's pension they could not afford to move anywhere from that big room where they lived. Her dream was to own a house. She had to wait until her sons began working to be able to save some money. As soon as her two oldest sons, Fyodor and Pyetr, were of the age to work, Yelena Danilovna rushed them to apply for jobs at the station of Nikitovka.

After their sons began helping the family by bringing home their wages, she saved all their money toward the purchase of a house. By the time their third son, Mikhail, began to work, Makar Timofeyevich and Yelena Danilovna were able to buy a small but nice house in the hamlet of Nikitovka.

Finally, Yelena Danilovna had her dream house; it was made of wood and had carved decorations that were characteristic of Russian cottages at that time, and it was painted bright yellow. It was well constructed and stood for many years in the hamlet so that Yelena Danilovna's grandchildren could vividly remember it.



Makar and Yelena Gladky's Sons

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

Very few specific details about the childhood of Makar Timofeyevich's two oldest sons were ever remembered in our family, except that they attended the elementary school in the hamlet of Nikitovka for four years and that in their teens they were placed as the office boys at the station. One detail, however, that was well known—even by the grandchildren—was that Yelena Danilovna did not get along with her oldest sons and often quarreled with them even after they were adults. And so, it was common in our family to refer to her irreverently as a "Shrew Babka Yelena."

The eldest son, Fyodor, contracted tuberculosis in his youth and was continually sick. He began as a messenger boy for the railroad office and by learning on the job was promoted to office employee. Like his father, he didn't like to talk much, not even with his brothers. Probably because he felt always ill and tired, he didn't have any desire to be around people or to socialize. He never married and lived with his parents until he was about thirty years old, when he died of consumption.

The second-born son to Makar Timofeyevich and Yelena Danilovna, Pyetr, also lived with his parents for a very long time. He began working at the station as an office boy, but he was diligent and a quick learner. He received several promotions within a short time. By his merit and perseverance, in his early thirties he was appointed to the position of Assistant Railroad Stationmaster.

Pyetr was a tall, handsome young man; he had a naturally dark complexion, brown eyes, straight dark-brown hair, and an erect posture like his father. When he was promoted and received an increase in his salary, he decided to marry a young local woman he had been courting for some time. But his mother upset

his plans by vehemently opposing the marriage. She found some convincing evidence against the young woman, but probably her real reason for opposing this marriage was her greediness; she hated to lose her grip on the money that her son was bringing home. It became widely known at the station and in the hamlet that there was a highly dramatic quarrel between Pyetr's fiancée and his family. Afterwards, Pyetr was extremely upset and didn't want to stay in Nikitovka any longer. He requested the Railway Administration to transfer him to another station.

He was given a new position as a Railroad Stationmaster at the small station of Grammatikovo in southern Crimea. There, he received an apartment from the railway authorities. Pyetr thought that the mild climate would be good for his aging parents and decided to have them move and live with him. The railroad authorities allowed him to use an entire freight car for moving their household. Makar Timofeyevich and Yelena Danilovna sold their house in Nikitovka and moved to Crimea.

But Pyetr very soon realized that he had made a big mistake in having his parents live with him. He had a hard time getting along with his bossy, bad-tempered mother. The situation grew worse when he again announced that he wanted to get married, and his mother again objected most emphatically, telling him that she didn't want to have another woman in the house. Pyetr sent a message by telegraph to his brother, Mikhail, who at that time was a telegrapher at the station of Nikitovka. Pyetr pleaded that he needed urgent advice from him and their sister on the matters regarding their parents.

Mikhail immediately telegraphed his brother-in-law, Nikandr Yakovlyevich Myedvyedyev, who was the Stationmaster at the small station of Belyayevka to notify his sister Marusya, of Pyetr's imminent arrival and his plea for their advice. When the three of them met in Nikitovka, they decided to pitch in and help their parents buy their own home in Crimea even though the homes were more expensive there than the one they had sold in Nikitovka.

Makar Timofeyevich and Yelena Danilovna purchased an old one-story house with a barn and big fruit garden in a small town named Stary Krym. It was located in a canyon in the foothills, about twenty-five miles southeast of Feodossia on the southern shore of the Black Sea. The climate there was mild, and the winter

was warmer than spring in the Ukraine. The clean mountain air and nearby seashore attracted many tourists and health resort visitors who paid good money to rent a place year-round, especially in the wintertime.

Makar Timofeyevich and Yelena Danilovna converted part of the large, long barn into a room and a kitchen by installing wooden floors, two windows, a small door, and a brick stove. They lived there and rented the small house that stood on the corner of the street to resort visitors. The rent from the house plus the sale of fruit from their fruit garden provided additional income to supplement their railway pension. They had enough to live on, but Yelena Danilovna continued to complain that they did not have enough, so each of their children mailed to them five rubles every month.

After his parents were settled, Pyetr Makarovich married a well-to-do woman from Feodossia. They were blessed with two children born a few years apart—a daughter, Lidia, and a son, Boris. But Pyetr's happiness vanished quickly and his family life was disrupted because his wife died suddenly when the children were still very young.

Pyetr Makarovich was concerned for his small children and decided to find a woman who would be a good mother to Lidia and Boris. In his search, he met Alexandra Ivanovna Tsaritsyna, who was from a Russianized Greek family. She was a companion to a very rich lady and had even traveled with her abroad to Switzerland. Pyetr liked her and decided to marry her, because she was educated and well-mannered. He also thought that she would be good at raising his children. They had only one daughter, Ksenia, who was born the first year they were married.



Mikhail Makarovich Gladky

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

My father was the third son born to Makar Timofeyevich and Yelena Danilovna. They named him Mikhail. He greatly resembled his father and his brother Pyetr in appearance. He was slender, taller than average, and held his narrow shoulders back. His dark-brown hair cropped in a crew cut over his high forehead made his face appear to be longer than it really was. He had a straight, narrow nose, and under it a long moustache slightly curved up at the ends. He kept his short, well-rounded beard neatly shaved under his lower lip. And straight, narrow eyebrows accentuated his lively brown eyes.

As was the case with his older brothers, he had received only an elementary education in the hamlet school. He used to tell us, the children, that he didn't like his teacher, who hit the students with a ruler, and he often escaped from school through the window.

But Mikhail was intelligent and willing to learn; he educated himself in language, mathematics, and especially in music, for which he had a natural talent. On his own he learned to play the harmonium, a small keyboard organ, and violin, and he further specialized in choral singing. When filling out applications and documents, on questions regarding his education, he used to write, diplomatically, "educated at home," which meant educated by hired teachers or tutors in the student's home. Like his older brothers, Mikhail began working in his teens at the railway telegraph office and worked his way up from office boy to telegrapher. That's when employees at the telegraph office stopped calling him simply, Mikhail, and started respectfully calling him Mikhail Makarovich.

When Mikhail Makarovich turned twenty-one, he was called up for military service, but, after the required medical exam, he was given the so-called "White Discharge Card" because he had "a narrow chest, below standard measurements."

Like all railroad employees, he wore a uniform with distinct decorations identifying him as a telegraph employee. In the winter, he wore a double-breasted jacket, pants, and a cap made of black wool serge cloth with yellow tabs, piping, and cockade. In the summer, both the jacket and the cap were made of white canvas, the pants of black canvas, with the same yellow decorations.

As a young man, Mikhail Makarovich was always involved in social activities at the station of Nikitovka. In the summer, he organized the public festivities that were held in the alley leading to the railroad station. His younger brother, Pavel, who was home during summer vacation, enthusiastically joined in to help him. He drew and hung large posters announcing the events and decorated the alley with handmade lanterns, while Mikhail Makarovich organized the music and dance.

For a long time, there was no church at the station of Nikitovka, and railroad workers, employees, and their families attended church in the hamlet. When the new railway station was constructed, the Southern Railways Administration ordered that a huge iconostas¹ be erected in the waiting hall so that religious services could be held there on Sundays and on holidays.

During the first services held in the waiting hall, all who came tried to sing their best. It was such discordant singing that Mikhail Makarovich decided to organize the choir. He selected the choristers, trained them to read sheet music and succeeded in directing the choir himself. Later, when Southern Railways built a church with an adjacent two-classroom Railway School for the children of the railroad workers and employees, Mikhail Makarovich became Preceptor of the Railway Church Choir. He was given permission to take time out to direct the choir at church if his shift at the telegraph office was on Sundays or on holidays, or any other day of special religious services such as weddings, christenings, or funerals.

As the performance of the choir got better and better, Mikhail Makarovich diversified their repertoire by teaching the choristers classical as well as old Ukrainian and Russian folk songs that were especially applauded by the audience. They gave performances in an auditorium built by the Society of Public Services of Nikitovka. People came from all the surrounding communities to hear them sing there. In time, Mikhail

Makarovich and his choir became respected and well known for their fine musical programs, and they were invited to perform their concerts in the clubs at the surrounding mines and dolomite works. Later, when the station was remodeled, the fourth-class waiting room was converted to a Railway Club, and the choir performed there.

Marusia was the only daughter of Makar and Yelena, and she was very young when she married Nikandr Yakovlyevich Medvedyev and moved to live with him in Belyayevka, the small station where he was a stationmaster.¹

1. See the chapter "Nikandr Yakovlyevich Medvyedyev."



Pavel Makarovich Gladky

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

Makar Timofeyevich and Yelena Danilovna's youngest son, Pavel, was the most handsome of the family. He was tall and well built. However, he was the only brother to inherit the characteristic of their Gladky ancestors—the full and plump Trigubenko lips, which were very prominent on his otherwise well-proportioned face. He kept his long, straight, dark-brown hair neatly combed back, giving prominence to his face.

In his youth, Pavel had better luck than his brothers. When he was born, all his older brothers were already working and helping the family. Pavel demonstrated early a gift in language and the arts; he read eagerly, played piano, and he was very good at drawing and sculpture. He was the only one of Makar Timofeyevich's sons to receive a formal education beyond elementary school. In order to allow Pavel to attend the Men's Royal Academy in Isyum, all his brothers pitched in to pay for his tuition and living expenses. The Academy was a secondary preparatory school for entrance to technological and mining institutes of higher education.

His brother, Mikhail, preserved several photographs of Pavel's works created when he was a student of the Academy. Among them was a remarkable sculpture of Taras Shevchenko, the Ukrainian poet, whose poetry and songs Pavel greatly loved. Mikhail also preserved Pavel's student photo, in which he stood like a soldier at attention with a small sword hanging at his side. He wore a gray flannel academy uniform full-dress coat that fit tightly around his waistline and was fastened by closely spaced metal buttons running from its rigid military band collar almost to its hemline.

During summer vacation, Pavel enthusiastically helped his brother Mikhail, who organized festivities at the station of Nikitovka. He drew attractive large posters announcing events and made colorful paper lanterns that he hung in the alley.

Upon graduating from the Men's Royal Academy, Pavel went on to study Chinese at the Institute of Eastern Languages in the city of Tomsk, in Novosibirsk Territory. After graduating from the Institute, Pavel volunteered for military service, because as a volunteer he had to serve only two years instead of the regular four.

After serving in the military, his knowledge of Chinese gave Pavel Makarovich Gladky the opportunity to be accepted into civil service as an interpreter for the Judicial Court on the Eastern-Chinese Railway, in the town of Kharbin, in Manchuria. At that time the Court was involved in prosecuting gangs of Chinese railway robbers—the so-called *khunkhusy*—who attacked the trains, plundered freight cars, and robbed and murdered railway personnel and passengers.

In addition to his career in the civil service, Pavel Makarovich was very interested in Chinese art, sculpture, and music. He wrote, illustrated and published several booklets about these subjects. Copies of these booklets were preserved by his brother, Mikhail Makarovich, who kept all of Pavel's memorabilia as cherished family heirlooms and often allowed his children to admire them.



The Sisters Nadyezhda and Maria Mikhnyevich

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

My mother, Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna Mikhnyevich, was born in 1866 in Moscow. She and her older sister, Maria Vikyentyevna, were orphaned when they were very young. They remembered very little about their parents. They knew that both, their father and mother, were from Russianized Polish families belonging to the middle-social rank of gentry—the middle and lower ranks of nobility. They also knew that their parents were of Russian Orthodox faith, and that they resided in Moscow, as probably had a few generations of their ancestors. Being of noble descent, their parents were buried in the old, well-known Novo-Dyevichny cemetery in Moscow.

After their parents' deaths, their relatives arranged for the two sisters to be placed in a girls' boarding school for the orphans of the gentry's families. The small family estate fund was allocated to pay for the girls' personal needs, board, and tuition.

Growing up without their parents' love, the two sisters poured their affection out on each other, and their closeness provided the reciprocal emotional support that they needed. Maria had the stronger character of the two but was rigid in her habits and convictions. Being older, she felt responsible for her younger sister and was vigilant over and protective of her. Nadyezhda had a more agreeable character and was more flexible in her behavior and beliefs. Being younger, she always listened to her sister's advice, but she had a mind of her own and always reasoned things out and did what she considered best.

At the boarding school they were brought up with a strong emphasis on religion, Christian morality, and good manners befitting young gentry women. Besides the basic subjects of Russian and French Literature and History, Mathematics, and Natural Sciences, they were taught music, art, and fine

needlecrafts, which were considered to be essential to the gentlewoman's education. In addition to their general classical education, equivalent to gymnasium, they also received occupational preparation and graduated with certificates qualifying them to teach at elementary schools and in private homes.

With this preparation the young graduates, who did not have a family to go to, could quickly find employment and provide for themselves. At that time, teaching in public and private schools was common employment for women; women teachers were also in demand by the gentry, well-to-do, and the middle-to-high nobility who preferred their children to be tutored and educated at home rather than in the elementary schools.

After graduation, Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna and her sister, Maria Vikyentyevna, remained several years at their boarding school and taught there in order to complete their required teaching practices. This was their first paid employment, and they used all their money to prepare a dowry for themselves before they were ready to move out on their own. Both sisters had learned sewing and needlecrafts at school, and now in their free time, they made their own clothing and items for their future homes.

Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna and her sister dressed conservatively and unpretentiously because they had become accustomed to it at boarding school, and it was considered appropriate for teachers. According to the fashion of those days, they wore long dresses, skirts, and coats. Dresses and blouses for warm and cold weather had long sleeves, fitted bodices, and neckband collars. They were fastened down the center back with multiple small buttons. For the fall and winter, they made a couple of dresses and skirts in dark blue, brown, or gray wool cloth; for the summer and spring, they made them from cotton fabrics in the same colors. They also made several cotton blouses—white for the summer and darker colors for the winter.

Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna was accomplished at all fine needlework, while her sister preferred knitting and crocheting to embroidery. They shared their work by helping each other according to their abilities. Maria Vikyentyevna knitted and crocheted from wool useful items to wear such as sweaters, scarves, gloves and stockings. Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna skillfully

decorated in elaborate designs the entire fronts of blouses, yokes, collars, neckbands, and jabots. She did detailing such as embroidery, pin tucks, lace overlays, and delicate crochet with fine cotton. They also knitted and decorated with edgings and embroidery their linen and home accessories—bed sheets and pillowcases, towels, tablecloths and napkins, decorative cushions, and table runners. And while they were students, it took them years to crochet doilies and sets of bedspread and pillow shams.

When Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna and Maria Vikyentyevna were ready to leave boarding school, they went first to visit and seek advice from relatives who lived in the city of Kharkov in the Ukraine. One of their relatives was an accomplished actress at the Kharkovsky Theater and was well known in the theatrical and social circles of the city. Other relatives were part of the government bureaucracy and so had good connections. They directed the sisters to apply to the Administration of Southern Railways that had their headquarters in Kharkov. Having personal recommendations helped both sisters to be promptly considered as candidates for teaching positions at railway schools.

At that time, the Southern Railways administration was searching for a Headmistress who could also be a teacher for the new Railway school at the station of Nikitovka. Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna was appointed to that position, and she accepted it with great enthusiasm. Her sister, Maria Vikentyevna, was directed to apply at the Office of Yekaterininsky railways where she was appointed as a teacher at the Railway school at the station of Khartsisk, located on the rail-line leading from Nikitovka to Rostov-on-Don. This made both sisters very happy, because their schools were located within easy reach by railway. It was thus very convenient for them to visit each other during school vacations. They received free railroad tickets and departed immediately to their destinations, since they needed to settle in before the school year began.



Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna Mikhnyevich

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna Mikhnyevich arrived at the station of Nikitovka late in the summer, well in advance of the opening of school. Pyetr Makarovich Gladky, the Assistant Stationmaster, was standing on the platform when she got off the train. When she presented herself as Headmistress of the new Railway school, he welcomed her to Nikitovka and directed her to the Rail office to get the school keys. In the office they told her to settle temporarily in the Headmistress' office until they could find her a place to live. They ordered the errand boys to help her with her luggage.

The school was in the same building as the Christian Orthodox church that had been recently built by the Railway administration for families of the railway workers and employees. As a devoted Christian, Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna went at once to the church to thank God for her new place of employment. There she met the Batyushka and Matushka, as the clergyman and his wife were called, who blessed and welcomed her to their parish and made her feel right at home.

They noted immediately that Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna was an energetic young woman who would be an asset to the community. Batyushka informed her of the important people she needed to know when conducting school business; Matushka introduced her to the many practical details of daily life in Nikitovka. She complimented Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna on her dress that was fashioned after big-city styles. She admired her pure Russian Muscovite accent that was a sign of an educated and refined woman. She explained that this trait would distinguish her from local inhabitants, who spoke Russian with a southern accent mixed with dialects and Ukrainian words. Matushka also told Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna that with her pleasant looks and

gentlewoman's manners, she could choose among several eligible young men in their parish to whom she could introduce her. But Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna replied that school was the only thing on her mind at the moment.

Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna indeed presented herself as a distinguished young woman. She had a slender figure, was average in height, and neatly dressed. Her long, chestnut-brown hair was accurately arranged away from her face, combed neatly back and twisted into a tight knot secured with hairpins at the nape of her neck. She kept her small, narrow lips tightly composed, which lent her face a serious expression. And the manner of holding her chin slightly upward imparted an overall dignified demeanor. Those were some of the manners taught at boarding school to students preparing for a teaching career. Indeed, the first impression one had of her was her deportment, rather than any specific physical trait.

Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna was modest in her dress; however, she allowed herself to indulge in refined embellishments. In the fall and winter, the focal point of her costume was the white jabots attached to her dark-colored dresses; in the summer, she preferred to wear impeccably white blouses that enhanced her light complexion and lent a soft luminosity to her gray-blue eyes.

Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna returned from church with a good impression of the small, tightly connected community of railroad workers and employees of the station Nikitovka. She felt that she had made the right choice by accepting the position. Her mind had filled with high hopes for the future as a Headmistress of the new Railway school. She impatiently waited for the arrival any day now of the two teachers. And most of all she enthusiastically began preparations for welcoming her new students to the new school.



Mikhail Makarovich and Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

Mikhail Makarovich Gladky, as Preceptor of the new Railway church choir in Nikitovka, was among the first persons to meet Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna Mikhnyevich, the newly appointed Headmistress and teacher of the new Railway school. Their encounter was facilitated by Batyushka, who suggested to Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna that Mikhail Makarovich was talented in music and could teach her students music and singing. After a short interview, she hired him on the spot, and they decided upon a music program and a schedule that would not conflict with his shifts at the telegraph office.

Working together and having almost daily contact with each other, they soon discovered that they had many common interests. They liked to work with children, to take part in community cultural activities, and to socialize with friends and colleagues. And, although Nadyezhda Vikentyevna was nine years older than Mikhail Makarovich, from their first days they felt very comfortable in each other's company.

Later, their common interests and personal attraction led to a short courtship that culminated in marriage in 1899. During the wedding ceremony, the choristers honored the bride and groom with their best performance. Present at the ceremony were Mikhail Makarovich's parents, Makar Timofeyevich and Yelena Danilovna; his brother Pyetr Makarovich and his sister, Maria Makarovna, with her husband, Nikandr Yakovlyevich Myedvyedyev, and Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna's sister, Maria Vikyentyevna; two teachers from school; and the Stationmaster and many employees of the station of Nikitovka.

To honor Mikhail Makarovich as Preceptor of the Railway church choir, Matushka organized, for all who attended the ceremony, a reception with light refreshments, or a *zakuska*.

Everyone had a small glass of vodka or *nalivka* wishing health, happiness, and many children to the newlyweds. Then, Matushka helped Yelena Danilovna prepare a small dinner for the family and a few close friends.

Shortly before their marriage, Mikhail Makarovich was promoted to the rank of senior telegrapher and received a raise in salary appropriate to the position. Like all railway employees, Mikhail Makarovich and Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna received a rent-free apartment. They moved into one of the duplexes built long before for railway employees. The houses lined the railroad tracks on the so-called "right of way" land owned by Southern Railway. The houses were made of wood covered with clay and painted with whitewash.

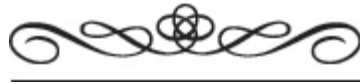
They had a comfortable apartment; it had four small rooms on one side of the hall, and on the other side was a small home office for Mikhail Makarovich and a big kitchen with a pantry. The entrance was through a back porch into the kitchen.

In the courtyard, there were cherry trees, an outhouse, a summer kitchen, a cool earth cellar for keeping seasonal provisions and perishable food, and a shed for wood and coal. These facilities were shared with the neighbors who lived in the other half of the house. Water was stored on the porch in a wooden barrel. It was delivered free by the water-carrier in a big barrel pulled by a horse.

In addition, like all railway employees, they received free petroleum for lighting, and coal and wood for heating and cooking. Also, they were entitled to twelve free round trip-tickets, which they could use for themselves and their children on any railway in the country, fifty-two provisional tickets for traveling on Southern railway lines, which they could use for school vacations, for traveling to purchase provisions, or for any other trips. In addition, when needed, Mikhail Makarovich could have free passage on local lines, if he was traveling in his railway uniform.

Mikhail Makarovich and Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna used their free tickets right away during their first school vacations. They visited her sister, Maria Vikyentyevna, who taught at the Rail school at the station of Khartsisk, and his sister, Maria Makarovna, whose husband, Nikandr Yakovlyevich Myedvyedyev, was a stationmaster at the small station of

Belyayevka.



The Family of Mikhail Makarovich and Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

After their marriage, Mikhail Makarovich and Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna continued in their careers and led a very active community life. When their first daughter, Anna, was born, Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna resigned from her position as Headmistress of the school but stayed on as a History teacher and also taught Needlecrafts to the girls.

Mikhail Makarovich and Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna had four children. After the birth of each child, she steadily gained weight, adding after each pregnancy quite a bit of fat. By the time her last son, Igor, was born, she had become very plump.

Although she had a full load teaching at school, she found time for community involvement and for educating all of her children at home. But, at first, she had one, and then two servants living in their home who helped her with cleaning, laundry, and cooking, as well as watching the children.

Their oldest daughter, Anna, was born in 1901, and they affectionately called her Anya. From infancy, she greatly resembled the Gladky ancestry, and as she grew older, these traits became more prominent. She was dark-complexioned with straight, dark-brown hair and brown eyes. Her high forehead, long, narrow nose, and wide lips were definitely Gladky. At an early age Anna had shown a pert, unrestrained way of voicing her opinions and a tendency to criticize others. She was not easy to get along with, and in the family her character was often compared to that of her paternal grandmother, who had been disparagingly called Babka Yelena.

On October 29, 1902, their oldest son, Orest, was born. They gave him the nickname Rostyk. He greatly resembled his father. He had the same long nose, high forehead, straight brown hair,

and brown eyes. But he had inherited his mother's light complexion and smooth skin. As a child, he was skinny and agile.



Mikhail Makarovich Gladky, telegrapher. From Identity Card, the Southern Railroads Branch, Russia, ca 1909.



Nadyezhda Vikiyentyevna Mikhnyevich Gladkaya, wife of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky, telegrapher. From Identity Card, the Southern Railroads Branch, Russia, ca 1909.

His father liked to tell a story about Rostyk when he was less than two years old. For Easter he was given a small chocolate egg with a “surprise” inside. Rostyk cracked the egg and started to eat the chocolate pieces before anybody had a chance to take out the “surprise,” which was a little tin heart.

His mother rushed to him, asking, “Rostyk, where is the little heart? Did you swallow it? Where is the little heart?” She swept her finger through his mouth, hoping to find it there.

“Little heart... swawow... little heart...” repeated Rostyk while holding one hand in a tight fist.

“Open your hand, Rostyk—show me what you have there,” his mother insisted.

But Rostik would not open his hand. Finally, his father opened it. But there was nothing in his hand.

Anya was jumping up and down, screaming maliciously, "Rostyk swallowed the little heart! Rostyk swallowed the little heart! Now, Rostyk will get sick!"

The joy of Easter turned into worry. What would happen to Rostyk if he had swallowed the tin heart? His mother could not sleep all night; she kept getting up to see if Rostyk was all right.

In the morning, a servant was cleaning the room. She came to Nadyezhda Vikyentyevna and said, "Look, Mistress! See what I found under the table?" And she handed her the little tin heart.

In 1906, their youngest daughter, Vera, was born. She was slender and above average height; even as a young girl she was taller than other girls her age. Like her mother, she had narrow lips and light-brown hair. But her brown eyes and long, narrow nose were both definitely Gladky traits. She was an obedient girl who did not cause her parents any trouble as she grew up.

On January 22, 1911, the youngest son, Igor, was born. He got all his physical traits from his mother. In childhood his hair was blonde, but later on it turned light brown. His light-gray eyes were exactly the color of his mother's, and he had her smooth, white skin and narrow lips. But as he grew up, his nose became more and more like his father's. It was probably the only Gladky trait that he inherited. As a small boy, he loved to be with his father during choir rehearsals, and he poked his nose into everything, trying to help with minor chores. As the youngest son he was raised more leniently with less emphasis made by his mother on discipline and obedience than she used with his older brother, Orest, and his sisters, Anya and Vera.



Childhood and Youth in Nikitovka

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

My father¹ was always gentle and loving with us children. I remember when my sister Vera and my baby brother Igor were very young, he entertained them with their preferred play.

They liked to sit on his knees and play with his moustache.

"Are you a coward?" he would ask.

They would shake their head.

"No? Then pull my moustache!" And after letting a child pull it for a while, anticipating his reaction, he would suddenly bark, "Bau-bau!" The child would emit a loud shriek, and they would both laugh wholeheartedly.

I also remember that he was not strict with us children and always tried to see the reasons for our transgressions from a child's point of view. He never used corporal punishment, and when we deserved it, he left the task to our mother.

My mother² loved us, too, but she expected us to be obedient and to do what she ordered or taught us. In this she was strict but fair, both at home with us children and at school with her pupils. She usually punished fairly and in the accepted ways of the times. She either put the culprit in the corner of the room, or on his knees, or both. Sometimes she punished by leaving us without a dessert or by making us stay alone in our rooms. I remember that during one of my visits to my mother's classroom, she punished the whole class for something they did wrong by making them stand on their knees on the seats of their desks.

My father had two musical instruments at home, a harmonium and a violin. Both were accessible without restriction to us children at any time, and we were taught how to handle them at an early age to ensure that we would not damage them. When each child was old enough to understand and follow instructions, all of us were allowed to try to play both instruments.

Anna and Vera did not pursue it any further than exploring the instruments. I was the only one who had enough patience to learn to play both instruments from sheet music, but I did not learn with my father's passion and played mostly for my own pleasure. Igor didn't have any patience for learning to play the instruments, but he always hung around our father during choir rehearsals. All the children in our family grew up surrounded by our father's musical passion and activities, and they loved and learned to appreciate classical and folk music and songs.

My mother taught all of us children to read, write, and do basic arithmetic at an earlier age than was usually given in the two years of preparatory classes—or the equivalent education at home—which was required prior to admission to elementary school. She often took one of us with her to school in order to get us used to the school's routines, rules, behavior, discipline, and teacher's authority. We usually sat at a desk at the back of the classroom during her lessons. Therefore, all of us were ready before the established age to take the entrance exams and were accepted into elementary school by the age of eight.

I remember that about the time we began to attend elementary school, big changes were occurring at the station of Nikitovka. Southern Railways gradually demolished all old houses where their workers and employees lived. In their place was built a large complex of one-storied, three-apartment buildings and two-storied, six-apartment buildings of white brick.

Our family moved into one of the new one-story apartment buildings. It was a big change from the old four-room house in which we lived before. Our new apartment consisted of one very large room and one smaller room, a hall, and a big kitchen. I remember that I was wondering how all that furniture we had in the old place would fit in that big room. I watched with great curiosity how my mother directed the men who were moving the furniture to place each piece where she wanted it to be. I still remember vividly how that big room transformed itself into a multi-functional living space.

By the ingenious placement of our furniture, my mother subdivided the large room into several smaller living areas. At the far back, the room was divided across by two big pieces of furniture. A big wardrobe was placed with one side against the wall to the right side of the room and its other side against a tall

bookcase with glass doors. Both pieces faced the largest part of the room, and the backside was covered with the drapes. The left side, next to a window, was left unobstructed to allow entrance to a smaller area behind the furniture.

The division formed a sleeping area for my mother and father. In its right corner, their enameled-metal double bed was placed with one side against the wall. On the wall above the bed hung a large plush tapestry with a copy of a popular picture by the renowned Russian painter, I. I. Shishkyn, "Morning in the Pine Forest." It depicted a mother bear and three cubs playing in a pine forest. It was customary to hang such tapestries next to the side of the bed touching the wall. This was done primarily for the practical purpose of insulating the cold wall in the winter and to protect the wall from being rubbed up against it by the person sleeping next to it. Its decorative effects were secondary to its useful purpose.

This bed was so high that in my child's imagination it resembled a huge, white elephant. On a metal spring base there was a thick, feather-filled mattress, and on top of it was a soft and voluminous down-filled comforter with an elaborately decorated white embroidery protective cover. Every morning my mother ordered one of our maids, "Fluff the mattress and the comforter well!" And I often heard my mother warning the maid to be careful in placing on top of the comforter a white crocheted bedspread of intricate design. "Handle it gently," she would tell to the maid, and proudly explain: "It took me several years to crochet that bedspread while I was teaching at the boarding school in Moscow. That's when I began to prepare my dowry on my small salary." Then she would prompt the maid to puff up the many fluffy, down-filled pillows in their white embroidered pillowcases and pile them up in the corner of the bed, between the metal bars on the headboard and the tapestry. I often wanted to climb on top of that bed and feel how far down I would sink into that soft elephant body.

Next to the bed was a small night table covered with a starched, crocheted doily. On it were always a glass and a carafe of water. At the foot end of the bed—close to the window—stood a rocking chair with decorated plush cushions. My mother was strict about not allowing us children to rock on it. But my father, occasionally, when my mother was in the kitchen, would signal

one of us with his finger to get up on that chair and rock for a few minutes while he watched the door in case our mother would come in. We all kept this rocking-chair ritual a big secret from my mother, even Anna never told her about it.

On the larger side of the room division, opposite the bookcase full of books, stood the harmonium. It was always covered with a starched, crocheted runner and had a round piano stool in front of it. Against the wall was a small desk and chair. This area of the room was my father's home office. The desk was always piled high with copies of music scores that he prepared for all his choristers for their ongoing performances.

One of the drawers of his desk was specifically allocated for his smoking paraphernalia. In it was a box filled with tobacco, another box of cigarette-wrappers and the tools with which to fill them at home. My father began smoking very young in life; he considered himself to be a connoisseur of fine grades of tobacco and was very particular in his choice. It was his ritual to make up his own blend and his own cigarettes.

At the other end of the larger side of the room, opposite the door to the hall, was a dining area with a long dining table and chairs. Against the wall stood a modest cupboard with an armchair on each side of it. The table was covered by a tablecloth and table runner set, and the cupboard had a matching cupboard runner, both of which had been embroidered by my mother's skillful hands.

Facing the table, in a corner of the room, hung an icon that had belonged to my mother's parents and was a cherished family heirloom. A linen *rushnik*, elaborately embroidered in cross-stitch at both ends, was draped around the icon according to Ukrainian custom, and in front of the icon hung a small oil icon-lamp that was lit on Sundays and holidays.

In the center of the room, between the home office and dining areas, there was a living area that was defined by an oriental area rug that overlay the painted wood floor. To one side of the rug, between the windows, was a sofa. Above it hung, in simple wood frames, three large prints of the famous Russian composers whose music my father admired—Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Mussorgsky. On the other side of the rug were two armchairs that matched the sofa, with wood frames and upholstered seats, backs, and armrests in a soft plush. The upholstered parts were

protected by antimacassars³ crocheted by my mother.

The two windows were adorned with white curtains and linen draperies, the edges and hems of which were embroidered with the exquisite Richelieu guipure⁴ work that my mother was famous for. Lots of plants, of all sorts and sizes, stood under the windows. Especially numerous were the date palms, home-grown from pits.

Next to the big room was the children's room. All of us children slept in this smaller room; each had his own bed. The enameled-metal beds were placed with their headboards against one wall for the girls and on the opposite wall for the boys. There was a bookcase filled with children's books and school textbooks. In the middle of the room was a table and chairs, where we did our homework. A large wardrobe with double doors stood majestically to one side of the room, and next to it was a tall chest of drawers, where all the family linen was stored.

The doors of the two rooms opened onto a small hall, where there was a wall rack on which to hang seasonal outer-clothing. At one end of the hall was a washstand, where we took turns washing up in the mornings.

At the opposite end of the hall was a large kitchen with a separate walk-in pantry, where all non-perishable provisions were kept. The big brick stove with the oven was incorporated via chimney into the partially hollow wall in the hall between the kitchen and the big room. It provided heat for the whole house. The doors to the kitchen and the other rooms had to be left open to allow the heat to circulate throughout the house.

In the middle of the kitchen was a large table where the food was prepared and the family ate every day. The chairs were neatly tucked under the table so there would be enough room to move around. Sideways against the wall, leading out of the passageway, stood a narrow metal bed, upon which our two servants slept together with their positions reversed. The entrance of the apartment was through a small porch to the kitchen.

My father's colleagues, Khmara and Bayrachny, occupied the other two apartments in the building. All three families who lived in the three apartments shared several facilities built in the courtyard, including a summer kitchen—a wooden structure with a big brick stove and an oven—where all cooked on hot summer days. At the far end of the courtyard were a woodshed and an

outhouse that served all three families.

Other facilities served all the families living in all one-story buildings. Not far from our summer kitchen was a single outside faucet that provided running water. Farther on, behind the summer kitchens was a big earth cellar providing a cool place to store perishable provisions.

At first, the families received free petroleum for lighting, but by 1910, all the houses where railway workers and employees lived had electric light. Water and electricity were free, as was coal and wood for heating and cooking.

All railway workers and employees received free railway tickets⁵ for themselves and their families. Because my mother and father had free tickets, our whole family often visited both of our aunts—my mother's sister, Maria Vikentyevna, who lived in Taganrog, and my father's sister, Maria Makarovna, who lived in Belyayevka. Both sisters visited us in Nikitovka quite often, too. All three families maintained close ties throughout their lives.

My mother managed her household efficiently with the help of the two very carefully selected servants, to whom she gave detailed instructions and always checked to be certain that the work was well done. One servant took care of the children, laundry, and ironing, and helped the other servant with other chores. The other servant cooked, took care of the kitchen, heating, and cleaning the house.

When I was very young, my father already had a well-organized choir. My mother and we children attended church every Sunday. Usually we stood in the first row because in the Orthodox churches there were no benches to sit on—everybody stood and knelt on the floor. I was so proud to watch my father conduct the choir in front of everyone attending.

Although my father was a true believer, for him the most important part of church service was the music and the impeccable singing of his choir. Often, when one or more of the choristers was slightly out of tune, I could hear his exasperated whisper, "You, multi-striped devils!" I remember that after the service, Batyushka admonished him, "Mikhail Makarovich, please, at least try to say it not so loud, so the people in church won't hear it..."

My father and his choir became well-known throughout the surrounding communities. Sometimes our mother took us all to

hear their concerts of classical, old Ukrainian and Russian folk songs when they performed in the Railway Club, or in the auditorium at the Society of Public Services of Nikitovka. However, we didn't go when they were invited to perform in clubs at the surrounding mines and dolomite works. I remember that they also gave charity performances to benefit wounded soldiers and their families during World War One.

My father was also quite active in the local theatrical group, where he was a prompter. On occasion he prompted for the professional theatrical groups that often stopped in Nikitovka on return from seasonal performances in the resort areas of the Caucasus.

My mother had refined my father's appearance. Before he married, he wore his free railway uniform everywhere. She ordered him new suits made by the tailor, Golytzin, who came all the way from Slavyansk to take orders from his special customers in Nikitovka. He took their measurements and offered them a choice of fabrics from the best merchants, displaying samples that he brought with him. Then he came back for two fittings and to deliver the finished suits.

Both my father and my mother had many friends and were much respected in the community. Someone was always visiting them in the evenings, on Sundays, and on holidays. Batyushka and Matushka with their children visited often, combining the pleasure of the company of friends with the need to discuss and make plans for the choir at the special church services. They had tea and dessert, and we children played together and became friends.

Other visitors were also good friends with our whole family. Among those who visited frequently were the Assistant Railroad Stationmaster, Kuzenko, his wife Mar'ya Nykolayevna and their son, Vadim, who was my schoolmate and best friend. Occasionally my father's friend Piletsky came by to have a good talk. He was from the office of railway-carriage and locomotive repair works. In addition, my father selflessly gave up his free time to hold rehearsals at home with the choir bass singer, Bayrachny, and to hold thorough or special rehearsals with other members of the choir apart from the group, and he accompanied them on harmonium or violin. We children were allowed to listen if we wanted.

Our mother was a very skillful needlecrafter, and our home was like a display case containing samples of her craftsmanship: doilies, table runners, tablecloths, napkins, bedspreads, bed sheets, towels, and, of course, her own and her children's clothing. She always had several projects underway: fine embroidery, crocheting, or knitting wool items for the family. In the evenings she enjoyed the company of her friends, Lyubov Ivanovna Tytova and Olga Ivanovna Popova, teachers from her school who were eager to learn the skills of her various needlecraft techniques and chat about many things that they had in common.

On certain days after school, especially in the wintertime, she invited about six to eight girls, her students, into her home and tutored them in needlecrafts. They would all sit in a circle and crochet or embroider. My sisters would join them. My mother would put on her gold frame glasses and would also work on a needlecraft project while telling them some interesting stories from history or literature. Especially, she liked to tell the stories from the Bible or New Testament, which she considered to be a subject that a teacher had a duty to include in her students' education.

In the hamlet of Nikitovka, as in any other small community, everyone knew everyone. My mother was trusted and respected for her wisdom by her students and their parents, who sought her advice when making important family decisions. For instance, when their daughters were to be engaged, they would ask her, "That young man is proposing to our daughter. What you think of him? Should we give him our daughter in marriage?" My mother would advise them according to her best judgment: "That one drinks already when he is young; he probably will be a drunkard. You'd better forget about him." About another one she might say, "This one will be a good husband. He is a good worker and is respected by his superiors." Her advice was always taken very seriously by the parents.

During religious holidays, my mother would put on her best dress, and my father would put on his best suit and they would wait for visitors to stop by with greetings. At Christmas, in the dining portion of the large room, the table was covered with an elaborately embroidered, festive tablecloth. On the table were several bottles of vodka and various kinds of *nalivka*, and lots of

cold refreshments: ham, *pirozhky*, all sorts of salami, sardines, spiced sprats, cheeses, nuts, fruits, and all kinds of baked goods. Friends, acquaintances, choristers, and co-workers would come one after the other, alone or with their families to have a glass of *nalivka* or vodka and some refreshments, and their children would have some sweets. The visitors would exchange holiday greetings and good wishes with our parents, talk a little about their common interests, and depart to visit another house.

When my sister Anna and I grew up, at about the age of ten, it was time for us to start secondary school. The nearest gymnasium was located in Isyum. Instead of sending us to live with strangers in Isyum, we were sent to Taganrog to live with our aunt Marusya, my mother's sister, so we could attend the gymnasium there. We both passed the gymnasium entrance examinations and were accepted into the first class. Anna enrolled in the Women's Gymnasium in 1909, and I enrolled in the Men's Gymnasium two years later, in 1911.

In both gymnasiums there were eight years of studies. Each year at both institutions the curriculum included Russian Language and Literature, History, Mathematics, and Foreign Languages. These were taught from the first year on and included two languages for girls and four for boys. In the first year German was introduced; in the second, French; in the third, Latin; and in the fourth, Greek. In addition, at different years Biology, Physics, and Chemistry were taught. Gymnastics was required for boys every year. After their seventh year, young women could enroll in the University, or they could enroll in an optional eighth year at a Women's Gymnasium that qualified them to teach in the elementary schools. Or they could take occupationally oriented courses to prepare for nursing or office work. The Men's Gymnasium also prepared students for university entrance, but young men who didn't plan to pursue further studies could enroll in an eight-year course that qualified them to teach at elementary schools or trained them for government service. Therefore, when a young man or woman graduated from gymnasium, if he or she didn't plan to go on to study further at a university, they were ready to begin a career in any of the fields offered in the eight years at gymnasium.



The Yurevich Family

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

After leaving the boarding school in Moscow, Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich,¹ Nadyezhda Vikentyevna's sister, was appointed by the Yekaterininsky railway administration as a teacher at the Railway school at the station of Khartsisk, which was located on the rail line leading from Nikitovka to Rostov-on-Don. There she met Bonifaty Ustinovich Yurevich, a young man from a Russianized Polish family. He lived in the town of Taganrog on the eastern shore of the Azov Sea, where he worked for the Post Office as supervisor of the installation of telegraphic lines. They got married, and Maria Vikentyevna moved to Taganrog, where her husband lived with his father. In the new town she didn't look for employment in a school but conducted private classes with about fifty to sixty students in elementary education. In addition, she gave private lessons and tutored students in her home.

Maria Vikentyevna was a tall, stout woman with light-brown hair combed upward and twisted at the back in a tight knot. For close-up work and reading, she had a small pince-nez pinched on her nose. She held her lips tightly closed, which gave her face a rather stern expression that was accentuated even more by the cold stare she gave children when she talked to them.

Maria Vikentyevna and Bonifaty Ustinovich had three children—two daughters and a son. The oldest daughter they named for her mother, Maria, and nicknamed her Marusya also; the youngest, Lyudmyla, died very young. The son, Bonifaty, was named after his father.

Soon after her first child was born, Maria Vikentyevna found a new way to earn additional income for the family, and they moved to another house. That house was located in a suburb of Taganrog called Kaspirovka. In the front part of the house there was a small Spirit Shop, which commonly was called simply the Monopoly because the sale of alcoholic beverages was a monopoly of the government. The State Treasury owned all Spirit

shops. To take care of the shop and to sell vodka and other alcoholic beverages, the Treasury hired a woman that was called *posydelka*. Maria Vikentyevna, as a *posydelka*, received a salary, a free adjacent apartment, and fuel for heating, cooking, and lighting.

Since taking care of the store took up most of her time, she gave up teaching classes in elementary education. She kept only private students from gymnasiums—whom she tutored in special subjects—and volunteers for special areas of military services—whom she helped to prepare for military entrance examinations.

In Kaspirovka the store was known as “Marusya’s Monopoly,” and a *chastoushka*² was even invented, which passersby sang when encountering habitual Monopoly patrons headed toward the store.

Maria Vikentyevna took care of the customers, and Bonifaty Ustinovich, upon coming home after a day’s work at the Post Office, took the cash from the store to the State Treasury. He usually walked with his walking cane, as was the custom for a man in those days. His cane had a handle that was elaborately carved into the shape of a hatchet. To speed up his walking time, he would take a shortcut by walking through small, narrow alleys instead of taking the main roads.

One day, he took his son, Bonifaty, with him and proceeded along his usual route. But, as soon as he entered the alley, two muzhiks³ ambushed him there. One grabbed his son around the neck and ordered, “Give us the money!” When the other one tried to grab the moneybag, Bonifaty Ustinovich acted quickly and hit the first muzhik on the head with the handle of his cane. He hit the second one on the hand that held the moneybag. Not expecting such a quick reaction, the muzhiks panicked and ran away. Bonifaty Ustinovich reported the incident to the Treasurer and so, well enough, the police caught the muzhiks and brought them to court. Both father and son were called as witnesses during the trial. This episode was narrated many times in the Yurevich family; they presented it as a heroic act of Bonifaty Ustinovich.

Another incident that Bonifaty Ustinovich bragged about also involved thieves. It happened late at night when his hunting dog kept barking for a long time. Bonifaty Ustinovich grabbed his hunting gun and carefully went out the back door. He heard

someone crawling on the roof. So, he slowly walked to a well, climbed onto its border and in the dark, without taking aim, fired the gun over the roof. The thief rolled down the roof and fell into the street where his accomplice was waiting for him with a cart. They drove off as fast as they could.

In 1914, when the war against Germany started, the government stopped selling all alcoholic beverages and closed all their monopolies. By this time, Bonifaty Ustinovich had retired from the Post Office, with the government pension, and had taken over the Spirit Shop room. Maria Vikentyevna then increased the number of students she gave lessons to at home, tutoring more students in special subjects, and preparing students for entrance examinations at various schools and for military service exams. Since the Yurevich family had lost all income and benefits from the Spirit Shop, which was a Government monopoly, and the house and shop belonged to the State Treasury, the town arranged it so they could buy that house.

Bonifaty Ustinovich adapted the shop into his own room and put a cast iron stove in it, which he stoked himself with wood or coal. Children were allowed in this room only under his supervision because in a short time his room had begun to look like a museum. After he retired he began to collect antiques such as table lamps, clocks, watches, and similar items that he repaired for resale. He was a devout Catholic, and every Sunday, without exception, he would stop at the open market when returning from church and look for bargain items. After repairing and shining them, he sold them to select customers at a higher price than he had paid.



Attending Gymnasium in Taganrog

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

From the time we were very young, our mother often took us to visit our Aunt Maria in Taganrog. Therefore, we felt close to our cousins Bonifaty and Marusya. Cousin Marusya was a couple of years older than Anna, and Bonifaty was about four years older than I. When my parents decided to send us to attend gymnasiums in Taganrog, Anna and I lived for several years with Aunt Maria. This made us grow even closer to our cousins.

The Yurevichs' house was small, so sleeping arrangements for us children had to be improvised as best as possible. Anna slept with her cousin Marusya in one bed, and I slept on the portable bed placed sometimes in the hall and sometimes in my aunt's bedroom, where my cousin Bonifaty slept atop a big wooden trunk.

Though my aunt's husband was Catholic, she was devoted to the Russian Orthodox religion and brought her children up in the Orthodox faith. She was very strict with her children and especially rigorous and uncompromising when demanding obedience to the religious rules she established. She insisted that we children all say our prayers aloud each morning and night on our knees on the floor and checked to see that we were doing it right.

Although Anna and I got along quite well with our cousins, it was a different story with our Aunt Maria. My mother had a more liberal interpretation of saying a prayer before going to sleep. For me, not being used to such strict rules at home, kneeling was real torture. I wrote my mother such a whiny letter, complaining about the impossible demands and expectations of my aunt that my mother considered it necessary to come to Taganrog herself to settle the matter with her sister. After many hours of negotiation, Aunt Maria finally conceded in this argument; she did not torture

me with kneeling prayers anymore.



***Mikhnyevich sisters with their children.** First row, from left: Orest (Rostik) Mikhailovich Gladky (age 10), Anna (Anya) Mikhailovna Gladkaya (age 12); second row: Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich Yuryevich; Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich Gladkaya; Maria (Marusya) Bonifatyevna Yuryevich, and Gladky's family neighbor from Nikitovka. Taganrog, Russia, 1912.*

Every Sunday afternoon my uncle, Bonifaty Ustinovich, had a visitor, a young Catholic priest from his church. Being young, the priest liked to have conversations with my cousin, Marusya, and my sister, Anya. At that time Marusya was an attractive young girl of about seventeen or eighteen. Suddenly the young priest disappeared from the church. After several months he returned dressed in layman's clothes and asked Bonifaty Ustinovich for the hand of his daughter Marusya in marriage. But, because he had previously been a priest, Bonifaty Ustinovich refused to give his permission. I remember that my cousin Marusya was upset for a long time after her unsuccessful engagement.

In 1914, when my cousin Bonifaty was about seventeen years old and in his last year in gymnasium, he had an appendectomy. In the hospital they made him get up before he was steady on his feet, and he fell and broke his leg. The leg was put in a cast, and in those days a patient with a fractured leg was kept to recover in

the hospital. Therefore, Bonifaty stayed at the hospital for several weeks until he was able to walk with crutches. During his long stay at the hospital, he fell in love with Tatyana Kekusheva, one of the young nurses who took care of him. They continued to see each other and, in the summer of 1915, when Bonifaty graduated from gymnasium, they decided to get married. Maria Vikentyevna and Bonifaty Ustinovich expected their son to enroll at the university and absolutely opposed the marriage.

Determined that he had the right to make his own decision, Bonifaty and Tatyana came to Nikitovka to seek help from his Aunt Nadyezhda and Uncle Mikhail, because they wanted their marriage to be consecrated in the church. After examining the situation and all its consequences, my mother and father decided they could not allow their nephew to live in sin, as he said he would do if there was no other way. They decided to help the couple, especially after Bonifaty reassured them that he would attend the university after they were married.

My mother notified her sister that her son's wedding would be held in Nikitovka on such and such date and emphasized Bonifaty's promise to attend the university. But Maria Vikentyevna and Bonifaty Ustinovich refused to come to their son's wedding. My father made all the arrangements at his church so that everything would be according to the traditions of the Russian Orthodox religion, and he gave them the best possible wedding ceremony, with his choir singing during the service. After the ceremony at church, my mother had a festive dinner ready at our home.

During the dinner, my mother sent me to get fresh water and gave me a glass pitcher. I zealously ran to the faucet in the courtyard and back, but my hands were wet, and the pitcher slipped out of them onto the floor, right in front of all the people sitting at the table. Anna, who was always outspoken, started to shame me, saying that at fourteen years of age, I still couldn't do anything right. To make me feel even worse, she added, "Now, you see what you have done? This means that the marriage will be broken, too!"

My father stopped her right there, saying, "Stop talking nonsense!" But it was too late; everybody had a bitter feeling after hearing these folks' bad omen.

Bonifaty and Tatyana returned to Taganrog. They lived in

Tatyana's rent-free room that she'd lived in before, as a hospital nurse and where she continued to work after her marriage.

Bonifaty kept his promise; he enrolled and attended the university at Rostov-on-Don, traveling every day by rail, which was about two hours one way. During their first year of marriage, their son, Yury, was born.

In 1916, during summer vacation, my uncle Bonifaty Ustinovich suddenly died of a heart attack. On that sad occasion my Aunt Maria and her son Bonifaty reconciled, with a little help from my mother and my father, who had come to the funeral. My Aunt Maria remained alone, because her daughter Marusya got married.

Marusya went to live far from home in the Caucasus in a large Cossack village, called in Russian *stanitsa*, Kyslovodsk. She moved there with her husband, Ivanov, a teacher, who was by origin a Cossack. She had met him after graduating from gymnasium when she got the position of elementary school teacher at the railroad school at the station of Khanzhonkovo, which was located south of Nikitovka on the Southern rail line going to Rostov-on-Don. They had two children, a son, Igor, and a daughter whose name I don't remember. Marusya's husband turned out to be a drunkard and a womanizer, and she had an unsuccessful personal and family life.

In the fall of 1916, when Anna and I returned to study in gymnasium at Taganrog, Anna slept in cousin Marusya's bed, and I had Bonifaty Ustinovich's room all to myself. I finished the seventh school year there. After summer vacation, in the fall of 1917, the new gymnasium had opened in Nikitovka, and I stayed at home to finish my eighth and last year there. Anna, influenced by the enthusiasm of many young women during wartime, enrolled in a one-year nursing course and after graduating stayed in Taganrog to work at a military hospital. At the beginning of 1918, she returned home to Nikitovka and worked in the railway hospital.



PART TWO

**Revolution and
Civil War**



We Are the Masters!

By Antonina G. Gladky

On one of those worrisome days at the beginning of the Revolution, Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy, who had been a men's tailor for many years, was visited by his former apprentice, Stepan Bolotov, nicknamed "Styopa," but everybody called him "Styopka," a pejorative that he fully deserved. Styopa was already displaying proudly the symbol of the Revolution—a red bow attached by a tailor's pin to the front of his cap.

As soon as he entered the house, he solemnly declared, "Well, Gavriyl Danilovich, the Tsar, then, has run from our hot pursuit."

With an exaggerated expression of importance on his face, he pointed to the red bow on his cap and added, "Now, then, we are the masters!"

"But, Styopa," Gavriyl Danilovich looked at him in amazement, "you are not a revolutionary, and you never have been one!"

"Never mind," replied Styopa resolutely, "I will join the revolutionaries tomorrow."

"Besides, you are illiterate," his former Master tried to dissuade him. "You never wanted to learn or to work."

"It doesn't matter," rebutted Styopa. "Now I will learn."

Gavriyl Danilovich looked with disbelief at his lazy apprentice who now wanted to learn something.

"Have you heard," asked Styopa, suddenly raising his voice, "what they've printed in the newspapers?"

Gavriyl Danilovich just shook his head.

Glaring defiantly at his former Master Tailor, Styopa shouted memorized revolutionary slogans:

"All power—to the poor!"

"All land—to the peasants!"

"All factories—to the workers!"

"All prisoners—out of the prisons!"

"End to war!"

Gavriyl Danilovich was bewildered by this sudden, arrogant outburst by his lazy former apprentice but tried to remain calm and not to raise his voice.

"The devil has possessed you, Styopa," he said, crossing himself. "Go to church and pray God to liberate you from the evil spirit."

"Forget about your church!" shouted Styopa, extending his arm and pointing accusatorily at his former Master. "Yes, your church!" Then he quickly added with sarcasm, "Soon we will shut down all the churches!"

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Gavriyl Danilovich, who was a devoted Christian. He crossed himself repeatedly and began to pray.

Satisfied with his bravado, Styopa headed toward the door, laughing with malicious pleasure, "Ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha! Old man, we will show you who the masters are now!"

For several days after his former apprentice's visit, Gavriyl Danilovich was troubled by the last words that Styopa said to him about the churches. Unsuccessfully, he was trying to find an answer to what worried him the most: "Why would Styopa and his comrades revolutionaries would close all the churches? Why??? And in whose name would they do that? In whose name???"



Medieval Execution

By Orest M. Gladky

After the revolution, the civil war started gradually as a movement to save Russia. Clashes between the Reds and Whites polarized the population. In every family came the moment when a decision had to be made which side they were on—were they for the Soviets or for Russia?

There was much confusion in the news about what was happening around the country. The railroad station of Nikitovka was a crossing point for the trains coming from north to south and from east to west, and news from all over the country was received through passengers and railroad workers. The station was a valuable strategic point for both, the Reds and the Whites, and changed hands several times.

I remember vividly what happened during one of the few days when the Reds occupied Nikitovka. It was in the middle of October, and the director of our gymnasium announced an unscheduled recess for students until the situation calmed down.

On the second day of vacation, I strolled pensively along the railroad tracks with sad, unclear thoughts. In my young mind I tried to understand why the Reds had arrested and executed several well-known, respected citizens and railroad employees, some of whom my family and I knew very well. They were decent people who had never harmed anyone.

I came to a woodsy grove along the railroad tracks—a place I liked to go as a boy to play—and went deeper into the thicket and sat on a stump. Flocks of crows flew over the grove cawing loudly and distracted me for a while. Then there was silence, and everything around me felt strangely unreal. I observed as a yellow leaf fell slowly to the ground; after a while the faint rustle of some small animal caught my attention. Through the yellow and orange leaves above me, the leaden autumn sky weighed heavily on my spirit and brought with it an ineffable feeling of sadness...

Suddenly I heard, far away, the clanking sound of metal that

quickly increased in intensity. I rose from the stump and saw a shunting engine coming from the station. As it came closer, I saw that it displayed the Red flag and pulled only one freight car. "A revolutionary train!" I thought and sat back down on the stump. The locomotive was traveling fast, but as soon as it entered the grove, it slowed and then stopped so close to me that I could see the engine's smokestack.

I again stood and was about to leave my refuge to see what was happening when some instinct stopped me from moving. "The Reds!" I thought. "It's better that I keep quiet so I don't reveal my presence here." I sat down once more, but with cautious curiosity observed what was going on through the tree branches.

Several men in black leather jackets jumped out of the freight car onto the graveled railroad embankment. Then somebody pushed out of the car other men, dressed in common clothing with their hands tied behind their backs. "Prisoners," I guessed and counted, "One, two, three ... six... ten, eleven..."

The men in black leather jackets held revolvers in their hands and forced the prisoners inside a rectangle formed by a stack of new railroad planks coated with tar. Then they barricaded them in with some wooden snow fences that had been stored nearby. After that, they rolled two metal barrels out of the car and poured petroleum all over the planks and fences. In a few moments I saw flames shooting high above the treetops.

Terrifying screams of horror resounded from the burning hell. Then the screams of the unknown prisoners being burned alive changed to faint but macabre and terrifying groans. Close to the ground the air was filled with the cloying smells of petroleum, burning tar, clothing, and flesh...

For a short time, the men in black leather jackets observed the fire but did not wait for the fire to subside. They climbed back into the car, and the engine pushed it back to the station.

I stayed in my hiding place for some time, stunned by what I had witnessed. Shuddering with horror, I felt numb, like I wasn't even alive. I tried to move my legs, but they would not obey me. My mind refused to comprehend what had just happened...

Dazed and confused, I wandered along the railroad tracks for the rest of the day.

When I returned home that evening, feeling jaded and

exhausted, my father was telling the news that earlier in the day eleven White officers dressed in civilian clothing had been trying to find a train going south, where the Whites were holding their positions. Suddenly they were seized by the Reds and taken away.

"They burned them all alive..." I whispered. Then a painful scream erupted from my young chest, "I saw it! I saw it happen in the grove!"

The whole family was shocked by my revelation.

Hearing that his son had witnessed the execution appalled my father. He tightly embraced me as if he were trying to squeeze the terrifying experience out of me.

He was able to ask only, "In whose name was this medieval execution done? In whose name?"

That time, the Reds did not stay in Nikitovka long enough to make any further reprisals, but what they had done was enough to scare the population and demonstrate what would happen when they came back again.



The Noble Hearts

By Orest M. Gladky

I remember my youth, my friends and our noble hearts full of enthusiasm and spirit of sacrifice. We had to save Russia from the Red terror. It is so vivid in my mind that I could see clearly, as if it were only yesterday—a small group of gymnasium students in a big classroom, some sitting on the benches, the others on the teacher's desk and on the windowsills.

Notwithstanding the critical situation and the acuteness of a question that was troubling all of us, our deliberation had the character of a peaceful discussion rather than of a formal meeting. That's how a blond, blue-eyed Andrey Kozhan was always able to organize and keep any of our gatherings going smoothly.

Andrey, who was by birth from a simple peasants-workers family, felt hatred for Bolshevism from the first days of Revolution. Any time when the question about the fight of Whites and Reds came up in a discussion, Andrey quietly dissuaded the most ardent defendants of the Reds. Even the teacher of Russian language, Stanislav Semyenovitch, who decided to conduct Red propaganda among the gymnasium students, was once so snubbed off by his student that he never got into political arguments in his presence.

That day a discussion was called forth by the new atrocity committed yesterday by the "Red-skinned," as we, the students, called Bolsheviks. I told Andrey that by pure chance I witnessed the execution of eleven White officers by the Reds who temporarily were occupying our railroad station of Nikitovka. Andrey asked me to tell my friends about the horror, the terrible ordeal and suffering that these men had to endure before their death.²

I told my friends that on that warm autumn Sunday morning I went out after breakfast for a walk. It was nice to be alone and contemplate, to collect my thoughts. As I was walking toward the Magdalinovsky grove, on my mind were recent tragic events that

had happened since the Reds occupied Nikitovka—the arrests and executions of people that our parents and all of us knew and respected.

I was reflecting on how good it would be if the world could be in such order that the people wouldn't have any sorrows and that the natural end of life would be without pain. But those were only dreams because I knew that it was impossible to have such a world. I entered the grove with my dreams and wandered for some time in the woods and then sat on a stump to rest. Everything was peaceful and quiet.

Then suddenly my peaceful contemplation was interrupted by the arrival of a locomotive displaying the Red flag and with only one freight car. I quickly realized that it was commanded by the Reds. Several men dressed in commissars' uniforms jumped out of the car, and two others were pushing out men who had their hands tied in the back. The men were falling down on the embankment, hurting themselves, but not even one of them emitted a sound. I counted eleven prisoners.

The Commissars had plenty of weapons: rifles, revolvers, machineguns, cartridge belts, and grenades—everything necessary to exterminate life. Shouting and profanity of a kind that I as a lad never heard before were coming out from the hurrying commissars. It is known that dirty deeds are done in a hurry, and so it was happening there.

I told my friends what was happening minute by minute during this horrible execution. How the commissars carefully rolled out two big barrels with petroleum. How the prisoners were assembled in a group, encircled with the snow fence, poured over with petroleum, and set on fire.

I concluded the story by saying, "The prisoners burned, taking with them great secret of courage, but even under the threat of fire, they didn't answer one word to the questioning commissars. Only the terrifying screams of horror resounded from the burning hell."

Like everybody at the station, my friends had heard about the White officers who were arrested at the station while they were trying to board the train going south, probably trying to reach their units fighting on the River Don. But they didn't know all the details that I told them. When I finished, the students remained sitting quietly stricken by the horror of the brutal execution.

Heavy burden fell on their hearts. Their eyes were cast down. Silence reigned in the room. Someone emitted a deep sigh.

"Here, my friends," concluded Andrey Kozhan, "one more atrocious incident committed by the Reds. What we are going to do? Be quiet and wait for more atrocities, or are we going to join the White Army units fighting on the Don?"

My good friend, Vadim Kuzenko, took out a cigarette and lighted it; then he got up, walked across the room, and stopped near Andrey. "Let's not make a decision the Bolsheviks' way," he suggested. "Let's not vote. Let our conscience tell each of us what to do. If anyone wants to know, I am going to join the White Army on the Don. Tomorrow at ten o'clock there is a train going to Taganrog, and from there I can reach the Whites by foot. It is even better to do it alone. 'Red-skinned' probably wouldn't catch or detain you."

"You are right, Vadim," I replied, "They also wouldn't touch the two of us—we are only boys! Who can pick on us? We always can say that we are traveling home, or to relatives. I will be there with you at ten. Maybe we can travel in different cars, if you are afraid."

"What do you think about me? Going into the Army and be afraid to travel together?" Vadim replied.

Boris Minayev was sitting silently, sunk in thoughts. He looked as if he didn't even hear the words of his friends. Andrey knew the reason for his silence and, wanting to change his friend's state of mind, asked him, "What? Is it difficult to solve this problem? Boris, believe me, nobody is trying to force you to go against your will. We know that you are with us in spirit. There is no obligation for you to be in the White Army. We all know how your departure to Don would affect your ailing parents. We all also know how your girlfriend Lidia Talimova would suffer. We look upon you as our dear friend, but no one is forcing you to go into the Army."

"Do not make a decision the Bolsheviks' way," Vadim repeated his preferred phrase. "I've decided—tomorrow at ten I am departing. I just want to know who also is going to join the White Army, but I don't want to make this a vote."

"Idea!" I shouted. "Boris will remain here as a messenger! We will notify him when we shall depart to join the Army, mail him our addresses, and keep contact through him."

"Gentlemen," Boris replied calmly, "I am joining the White Army. I am only thinking how I could prepare my mother and father. About Lidia I don't want even to think. Her young life should also be dedicated to fight for Russia. Maybe we together, hand in hand, will be fighting for the salvation of the Russian people."

Suddenly Mikhail Volkov vocalized the idea that probably was on everyone's mind, "Gentlemen, and if among us is a stool-pigeon? What do you think will come out of all our ideas if they are known to the Reds? Don't you think that I'm afraid. I am telling you ahead of time that I am joining the White Army. My idea had ripened already when the Reds shot my father only because he was a Station Master. And today for me was only a last push to carry out this decision."

Everyone looked at each other straight in the eyes. The new question scared everybody. Some even shivered nervously. No one wanted to give his life senselessly. All thought, as did I, "To die for the liberation of Russian people in fighting against the Reds, is all right. I am willing to die for a cause but to be killed as a homeless dog because he is being betrayed? No!"

"If you think about me," Yasha Malobrodsky said suddenly, "I am also joining the White Army!"

"You, a Jew, are joining the Whites?" Vadim asked. "You know well how White Guards, *byelogvardyeytsy*, say: "Kill the Jews, and save Russia!"

"I know that, but I am against the Bolsheviks."

"Think about it before it's too late. You will find it difficult as a Jew to be in the White Army. With the Bolsheviks, you will be treated well," Vadim suggested.

"Oh, no, Vadim. I want to be with my friends."

"Ah! You want to do it only for this reason? No, Mister Malobrodsky, there is no way for you to go with us," replied Vadim. "But it will be a shame if you turn out to be a stool-pigeon. But we are ready for it..."

The discussion took an unpleasant turn. Everybody knew that Vadim was an inveterate anti-Semite. And all also knew that Malobrodsky always tried to show that Jews are not like it was common for many people to think about them.

These discussions jarred the nerves of the students, and Andrey Kozhan decided to stop this and called loudly,

"Gentlemen, each of us has to prepare our parents. Our departure should not be considered as running away. Therefore, I think we need now to go home to have enough time to discuss it. Goodbye, friends—it's lunch time; I am leaving."

Everybody hurried toward the door and walked home either alone or with some friend. Everyone was sad. Probably everyone was thinking, as was I, "Farewell gymnasium classrooms, farewell dear place of youthful games and candid joyful gaiety, of first flashes of love; farewell the nest so carefully built by our parents, and maybe goodbye life..."

I arrived home in time for lunch. At the table mother and father were discussing the execution of the eleven officers burned by the Reds, recalling all the details that I told them yesterday. Although the execution was done in secrecy, everyone in Nikitovka knew about it, and it aroused great indignation.

I kept quiet. Only after the meal, when Father began to smoke, I told him, "Papa, I have to talk to you."

Father was surprised and worried. "Let's go into my office," which is what he called his special space in the living room. "We can talk there better." We silently walked across the large room. Father sat on the sofa, which was unusual, and I sat on the armchair.

"Well, my dear Papa, I decided to join the White Army. In fact, today a small group of students met in the Gymnasium, and most of my friends decided to join the White Army. It is impossible to live like this. Bolsheviks must be annihilated. Yesterday, as you know, I witnessed the killing of eleven officers; the day before we witnessed the killing of engineer Goryainov and his family and the plundering of his home. A few days ago, Mikhail Volkov's father was killed only because he was a Station Master. What can we expect tomorrow? Everything is falling, all moral principles on which our society existed for centuries, all laws, culture, even monuments, all is being destroyed... I don't know what is waiting for our family, for you, for Mother, sisters, and my little brother, what is waiting for me. But I don't want to wait for it silently."

"Rostik, but you are not seventeen yet—too soon to die."

"Even the babies are dying, Papa. I am capable of holding a gun in my hands and to defend not only my life but also the life of our family and of Russian people."

Father got up and walked silently across the room. "Have you

thought thoroughly about your decision? Are you attracted by the shining shoulder straps of the uniform? Remember, the war is not a gymnasium's parade!"

"Papa, I'm sorry for giving you a hard time, but you and Mama should understand that youth must become actively involved in this fight today because tomorrow it could be too late."

"Are you imagining clearly what the war is? Can I, the Father, give you consent for your death?"

"And, if tomorrow some commissar would kill me as a homeless dog, maybe with the price of thousands like me will be bought happiness of all our people, including our family."

"Logically you are right. But you should understand Orest that for me, as a Father, it is not easy now to tell you 'Yes.'"

"Papa, you can easily do this. Just turn away from me for a moment and look faraway."

We remained in silence for a moment, and then my father said, "I think, maybe you are right... and I am saying 'Yes.' But with Mama I will talk myself. I am happy that I brought up a son like you. I am happy that you decided to join the White Army, but at the same time it is very difficult for me to part with you and to think, God forbid... your death would bring us eternal grief. Orest, you should understand that it is very difficult for me."

"Oh, Papa, I promise to live until all Bolsheviks are annihilated."

"I will pray God to protect you, my dear." Father embraced me and added, "Remember only that the war is not a holiday."

And I left, allowing him to convince my mother. I had a lot to do. The most important was to see maybe for the last time the one about whom I was thinking day and night, whose image was clear and pure—the one who made my heart beat faster... She was my first love, pure and chaste. She was my life of youth, intelligent and beautiful. Her name was Lyubov, which means "love," and it combined her name with my feelings toward this wonderful girl.

I often called her "love to the second power." And when Lyuba, as I called her for short, was telling me that this was not enough, I was increasing it to love in the third power, fourth power, and so on, until the power was becoming of infinite degree, and I was given permission for a kiss. Our happiness was

already assured. Our lives were already intertwined with pure, bright feelings, and the future appeared to be shining with beauty and certainty, not being settled down on a vulgar coziness.

But now the hour arrived when life became distorted through the prism of the Russian revolution and could, hopefully for but a short time, sharply change its course, or at least change further peaceful perspectives, or maybe completely destroy them. I never talked with Lyuba about revolution, about Whites or Reds, or about becoming a soldier to defend one side or the other. But I was always thinking that my years were coming closer to the moment when life would require from me a direct, firsthand participation in a fight. And I definitely would fight now against the Reds.

But why explain this to Lyuba? I don't expect any conflict with her on this matter. It is impossible that she, a daughter of an engineer, a student in a gymnasium, would be defending Bolsheviks. I associated her with all clean, bright and beautiful and the Bolsheviks with all dirty, bloody and ugly.

To reach the coal mine where Lyuba lived, I was able to catch the cargo train. Then I walked briskly on the railroad tracks, passed the mine, and reached the miners' hamlet. The path of the alley leading to the house of engineer Tcherednichenko was covered with leaves. "Nobody is taking care of the alley," I thought. "So many fallen leaves, and there is nobody to remove them. Revolution..."

Yes, on the coal mine, Communism was on the loose. One could notice it by the disorder, and by the arrogant tone of women uttering:

"It's enough to oppress the working class!"

"You know, dear brothers, there's freedom!"

"Even if there is no food now, we are not going to work and will not allow our husbands go into the mines!"

"The coal is not needed by the revolution! Those who need it should themselves go into the mine. But us, we have worked enough!"

Passing through the mine only confirmed the consequences of this distorted perception of a concept of "freedom" by the working class not willing to work anymore—the mine had not been working for some time.

I came to Lyuba's house; it looked empty. No one answered

the bell at the front door. I decided to try the back door and walked through the courtyard. I was impressed by the quietness in the yard and got on the alert. "Something happened in this house," I thought. "Really, the stable is open, and there are no horses. The Reds probably took them away."

I came to the back door. Here also I had to knock a long time waiting for any sound inside. And when I was ready to leave, I heard light steps behind the door and then a clank of an iron hook that was used to lock the door.

"Ah, that's you, Orest?" Lyuba asked with an artificially sounding surprise. It was obvious that she studied well who was behind the door and then without asking opened the door. These days it was not common to do this.

"Lyuba, forgive me—maybe I came at the wrong time, but I am joining the White Army and came to say goodbye."

"They killed my father last night," she replied almost in a trance. "I cannot be with you here too long. I cannot leave Mama alone... she is not feeling well..."

"I will not come inside," I reassured her. "Why have they killed your father? Poor Lyuba, it must be very painful for you..."

"Goodbye, Orest. I cannot talk now..." she interrupted and closed the door.

I looked inquisitively at the house into which Lyuba disappeared. Our "Goodbye" came out somewhat incongruous, unfinished, unconvincing. I felt inside an unpleasant aftertaste. I felt uncomfortable, awkward, like not my usual self.

Without turning to look back, I walked into the alley, trying hard to imagine what happened to Lyuba. Why the last encounter came out in such strange and unpleasant form. And I came to the conclusion that all this was connected with the tragic death of her father. She was not herself today.

"But who killed her father? Definitely, Bolsheviks. A revenge—one more innocent victim," was the answer in my mind. I decided that I would write her and explain in a letter all that had accumulated in my soul during these last days. And I walked the long way home.

Mother encountered me with a question, "Well, Rostik, what do you intend to do?"

"To fight, Mamusya."⁴

"It's scary—you could be killed."

"Yes, Mama, everything could happen. Even here in this apartment there is no guarantee that we could remain alive. You know that last night they killed engineer Tcherednichenko?"

"Who? Nikolay Ivanovich?"

"Yes, yes... That's right, Mama, without a war."

"Why? What was the reason?"

"Don't you know? That's the way of Bolsheviks!"

"Rostik, you think they could come to us, too?"

"I don't know, Mama—anything could happen. That's why I am going to fight, to make everything better in this land, to make Russia be Russia again, and not a Bolshevik's preposterous state as it is becoming now. It is imperative to annihilate Bolsheviks, Mama. But to be killed—they can kill you here, too..."



White Army Volunteers

By Orest M. Gladky

In the middle of May 1919, the Whites regained control and returned to Nikitovka. This happened after the short occupation by the Reds, who burned eleven White officers and executed several well-known citizens.¹ That summer, the rumors reported on the “railroad news” were confirmed by people coming from different places—the Whites’ return was only temporary—the Reds were again moving closer and closer with more massive forces. This time, according to numerous witnesses, the news was particularly troubling—the Reds conscript the youth into the Red Army when they occupy an area.

For many families this was the time to demonstrate their allegiance to Russia and their rejection of Soviet rule, under which they didn’t want their children to live. In my family, my father and mother didn’t keep it secret from us children for whom they stood; there was no doubt in their answer, “For Russia, of course!”

That’s why my parents and parents of my four school friends—all boys between the ages of sixteen and seventeen—felt pressured to make a quick decision. My parents and the parents of Vadim Kuzenko, Mikhail and Adrian Volkov, and Yasha Malobrodsky had known each other for many years. They felt the need to discuss the precarious situation, especially the rumors that the Reds were drafting youth into their army, and to find the best solution for their sons. All us boys were present at their gathering and actively took part in the discussion that concerned our future.

There was no doubt in our parents’ minds that in the long run the Whites would prevail and restore order in our country. Our parents came to the unanimous decision, “Our sons would defend Russia from the ravages of revolution instead of waiting to be drafted into the Red Army and forced to fight for the Bolsheviks. After all,” they reasoned, “the rumors from Crimea are encouraging since England and France have begun to supply the

White Army with the arms and ammunition through the Bosphorus Straits access to the Black Sea.” They all agreed that once the Whites had time to regroup, they would push back the Reds north.

They asked us boys to be patient and wait until the Whites would retake Nikitovka, which was imminent, according to the railroad word of mouth news, and we would then join the White Army. Naturally, we boys were full of youthful enthusiasm and excited by the idea of enlisting as volunteers in the White Army.

This happened very soon when a White Army cavalry division retreated south from Kharkov. Vadim Kuzenko’s uncle, who was a captain in that division, was temporarily stationed in one of the railroad cars at the station of Nikitovka. Our parents sent us boys to see Roman Ivanovich Kuzenko. He enrolled us as volunteers in the White Army and immediately assigned us to the military school in Sevastopol, a coastal town in the southwestern Crimea. So, it did happen that, in the fall of 1919, my four friends and I, with our parents’ blessings, departed as volunteers for military school in Sevastopol.

Embracing us before departure, our parents told us, “Defend Russia, and don’t surrender to Bolsheviks!”

Although we left from the station of Nikitovka on a train, we often had to walk from one station to the next because of interruptions in railroad service. We joined many times the military or the civilians, or sometimes both, who were running south, escaping the Reds, who were pushing relentlessly from the north.

Finally, we reached Sevastopol, where Vadim, Yasha, and I were sent to artillery school, and Mikhail and Adrian were sent to learn another military specialty. We stayed at the military school for about four months. Training was proceeding with much speed, even though young volunteers had to learn how to use not only Russian, but also English and French artillery guns, as well as their machineguns, handguns, and other weapons supplied to the White Army by the English and French governments.

The brothers Mikhail and Adrian were sent to the front first. In April of 1920, Vadim and I were assigned to the Fifth Battery of Artillery Brigade under the command of General-Major Drozdovsky. At that time his troops were designated to defend Perekop, a narrow strip of land connecting the Crimean Peninsula

to the mainland and the Ukraine. Perekop was a strategically important point for Crimean defense. Whites hoped to stall the Reds there long enough to gain time to reorganize and receive more weapons and ammunition promised them from England.



Major-General Mikhail Gordyeyevich Drozdovsky, Commander of the 3rd Division of the White Volunteer Army that was first under the command of General A. I. Denikin and later under the General P. N. Vranghel, 1919–1920.
Photo public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

We joined the Fifth Battery Artillery Brigade in Sevastopol. We found there a long train of freight cars standing at the station. English artillery pieces were being loaded on platform cars, and horses were snorting in closed cars. The artillerymen were sitting and standing in freight cars with open doors. On the station platform, businesslike officers were solemnly discussing something. There on the platform was standing also the Commander of the Fifth Battery, Captain Mussyn-Pushkyn. Tall and erect, he was giving last-minute orders to the officers. The Fifth Battery Artillery Brigade was ready to depart for the front.

Vadim and I proudly presented ourselves to our Commander. Dressed in English uniforms, we stood at attention in front of the Captain and saluted him with serious expressions on our faces, our right hands touching the bills of our military caps.

“Sir Captain!” reported Vadim. “Volunteers Vadim Kuzenko and Orest Gladky are at your disposal!”

The Commander had already received the information that we were joining his unit. Immediately, without question, he told us, "Very well, gentlemen, you are going to travel in car number eighteen. You'd better hurry; we are departing shortly."

We both answered in unison, "Yes! Sir Captain!"

After making a turnabout, we went in search of car eighteen. We found the car quickly and climbed in. Politely we said "Hello!" to the others who were already there. Someone answered us, but most of them paid no attention to two young boys. We found a spot where there was room for us to sit together and accommodated ourselves on our military bags. The train began to move, slowly increasing its speed.

The sun quickly disappeared over the horizon, and the car swayed on in semi-darkness. The soldiers began to accommodate themselves for the night and propped their heads on military bags. Their quiet, calm conversations included no references to the forthcoming battle. Instead, they talked about how uncomfortable travel was in the freight cars, or about the homes and loved ones they had left behind. It seemed that they did not think about war; nobody talked about it—as if it didn't exist.

As Vadim and I talked, we tried very hard to make our voices sound more mature. We also imitated the way adult soldiers smoked and spat bitter nicotine saliva through their teeth. We silently observed the unknown men with whom we would fight against the Reds in the coming battle. Before long, the monotonous rumble of the train lulled us into a healthy, youthful sleep.

The morning greeted us with sun and warmth. A very small station accommodated our train on its reserve tracks. The Fifth Battery started to unload. The horses were led out of the freight cars. Field guns and various vehicles—field carts, machinegun carts, and simple peasant wagons—were rolled off platform cars. All battery implements were loaded onto these vehicles; machineguns were mounted on their carts, and draft horses were harnessed and attached to the carts. The horses waited impatiently to get on the road.

Before the unloading began, the battery Commander sent a message assigning the two of us as gun layers on the English cannons, called "three-inchers" to distinguish them from Russian cannons. I was assigned to the Fourth cannon, and Vadim was

assigned to the First cannon. Both of us knew the English cannons well from our training at artillery school, where we had been since we arrived from home until we were assigned to the Fifth Battery. Yes, we had good training, but we had never been in a real battle, and we awaited the event with an impatient, youthful excitement.

Finally, the formation was ready. The orders were given.

“Mount the horses!”

“Forward, ma-a-a-rch!”

The Fifth Battery began to move slowly westward out of the small rail station. At the head of the column was the Commander of the Battery on a black horse. Behind him were the cannons, and next, the machinegun carts, each with their officers and crew. The medical unit followed them, and the field kitchen with wagons carrying provisions and supplies was at the rear of the column.

The veteran artillerymen were curious about us newly arrived volunteers, the two young boys. I was skinny with brown hair and searching brown eyes. And Vadim was robust with broad shoulders, red hair, and red cheeks against a fair complexion, and greenish-gray eyes. The older artillerymen asked us if we had flown away from our parents’ nests. They were surprised that both of us “boys,” as they almost paternally called us, not only had permission from our fathers and mothers, but were acting on their precept to “Defend Russia, and don’t surrender to Bolsheviks!”

When the Fifth Artillery Division reached the small Tartar village of Kurman-Kemelchy, the order to stop was received. The soldiers were told to find a place to stay overnight in the village and the officers in the nearby manor.

In the morning, the artillerymen began intensive training on the English cannons, which were new to the veterans, who needed to learn how to use them. But for us two young volunteers just out of Artillery School who knew the cannons well, life away from the battlefield seemed pretty dull, and we waited impatiently to depart to the front line, where the real action was. We grew very excited when training was over and the order came to move in the direction of northwest.

The last stop we made was in a town called Armyansky Bazar² for final inspection. There the Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Armed Forces, General Baron P. N. Vrangel, inspected

the Fifth Artillery Division that was destined to get out to the spacious steppes of Southern Ukraine. There it would strike against the Reds in Tavrya, where they were trying to break through Perekop to Crimea.

Our young faces lit up with joy and pride at seeing the Commander-in-Chief in person and hearing his patriotic address to the troops, inciting them to: "Fight the Red scum who are trying to destroy Mother Russia!" After that short but impassioned speech, each soldier felt like he was personally responsible for the outcome of the impending battle. Vadim and I were full of fervor to get to the front line and finally take part in a real fight against the Bolsheviks.

On our way to the front, I became ill. During the veteran training, when we slept in a village hut, one of my comrades, also a young volunteer from the town of Bachmut, was ill and shivering from fever. I covered him with my blanket. The next day he was taken to the hospital with spotted fever typhus. My blanket was infested with lice, from which I caught the spotted fever typhus, too. I was unconscious the whole time I was being transferred from the field hospital to a busy military hospital in the town of Dzhankoy, a town in the northern Crimea near Perekop. There I remained unconscious a long time. Very rarely, I came to and understood what was going on around me. Later, I was transferred to another large military hospital in the town of Simferopol, a town in the interior of Crimea.

It was very late in the spring of 1920, when I finally got well, but not well enough to be sent to the front. I was so weak that I couldn't walk without getting dizzy. I was called before the military committee, where I was asked if there was any place I could go to convalesce. I mentioned that I had an uncle at the station of Feodosia, a coastal town in the south of Crimea, and the committee granted me a two-week furlough so I could go there to regain my strength.

I arrived at my uncle Pyetr's house unexpectedly. I told him the news from Nikitovka and all about my unsuccessful attempt to fight the Reds. At his home, I recovered my strength. By the end of June, I was finally strong enough to go back to military headquarters and request a return to the Fifth Artillery Division. Since I still looked pale and weak, I was sent for an interview with the captain in charge of recruitment for Officers' School. The

captain offered to send me to the Officers' School in Feodosia since I had enough education to be accepted there. But I firmly replied, "No! And no! Sir Captain, there are already too many officers and not enough soldiers! I want to return to the Fifth Artillery Division."

Upon hearing my convincing refusal to attend Officers' School, the captain ordered, "Your Division is now right on the front line north of Perekop, engaged in fighting the Red cavalry under the command of Zhloba. You may join them as soon as you find transportation there."

"Yes, Sir," I replied with youthful enthusiasm.

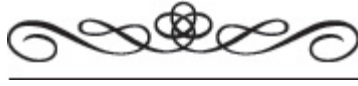
I boarded the first train going north. It was bringing supplies, ammunition, and soldiers returning to their detachments at the front lines after recuperating in the military hospital in Feodosia. When the train arrived at the station of Dzhankoy, ammunition and provisions were unloaded from the railroad cars and then reloaded onto awaiting wagons for delivery to the front line. I found a wagon going to the Fifth Artillery Division and traveled in it to my destination. The driver knew Vadim and gave me the good news that my friend was alive and well.

I found Vadim greatly matured due to several months of hard living in open fields and fighting on the front line. His face was burned by sun and wind, and his uniform and boots were worn out. Vadim had learned from the veteran artillerymen to exaggerate when telling about the battles he had fought, and he boasted about his military experiences. It made me feel bad for having lost so much time fighting for my own life and winning only one long battle with an invisible enemy called "typhus." I felt even worse for having lost during my illness such glorious moments of fighting with the real enemy of Russia, the Bolsheviks. But now... now, I was overwhelmed by a patriotic love for Russia and a burning determination to do what I had come here for in the first place—fight the "Red scum."

However, I had returned at a very critical time in the defense of Perekop. Small bands of Red cavalry occasionally penetrated White territory, and enemy artillery was already reaching our positions. Now I had the chance to fire my cannon, sometimes non-stop, all day long. The pressure from the Reds was increasing steadily, and the Fifth Artillery Division slowly retreated south. Now we fired our artillery guns at the Reds mostly in defensive

tactics, trying to prevent them from surrounding or overrunning us or the other White positions where our men were desperately fighting in this region.

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1. See the chapter “Medieval Execution.”



Nata

By Orest M. Gladky

It was the seventeenth or eighteenth of October, by the old calendar, of the catastrophic year 1920, when the fight of the Whites to save Holy Russia was coming close to a dismal outcome. Thousands of exhausted Russian men wearing Russian and English uniforms swarmed over the wide, autumn-gloomy steppes of the southern Ukraine, right at the doors of Crimea. They were powerless to stem the tide of raging, advancing Red cavalry that outnumbered them many times over. The cavalry of Bolshevik General Budenny and the Red infantry of Siberians drafted by Bolsheviks and sent there to “liberate” Crimea from the last stronghold of the Whites were too great an enemy.

Disarranged and disconnected White military units tried to avoid or desperately fought to break free of the Red encirclement. All units anxiously sought to find a way to Perikop and the Sivashy,¹ or to the Chongarsky Railroad Bridge. They hoped these obstacles would serve as natural fortifications that would help them to hold back the advancing wild Red hordes. In those troubled days, I turned eighteen.

In one of the Red artillery² shelling, a few days before my birthday, I suffered a contusion in my left leg, my left eardrum was ruptured from the air pressure of the explosion, and I lost my hearing. I was transferred to a transport unit that was rapidly retreating south toward the Black Sea.

The horses were rushing at full speed on the dusty autumn road toward the Sivashy. To the right were the railroad tracks; to the left, the immense flatness of harvested fields. In the watchful tension, one could hear the muffled thud of horses’ hooves on the soft, dusty road and occasional peremptory shouting of the drivers. Officers and soldiers intently scrutinized the faraway murkiness. Their thoughts were focused on finding a way to escape from being surrounded by the Reds.

Unexpectedly, far off to the right on the other side of the

railroad tracks appeared the barely defined figures of Red cavalry riders. The transport drivers urged the horses into a gallop.

From the station of Salkovo, situated not far from the town of Militopol³ appeared the strings of carts and carriages of every kind, and their horses galloped at full speed through the field, racing each other. The drivers urged the horses on with wild screams, and to increase their speed they threw part of their loads to the ground, littering it with all kinds of things. When they reached our transport unit, they rode alongside our wagons, inserted themselves between them; then they finally passed and left us behind. On foot, soldiers, civilians, and nurses in blue uniforms ran between and behind the carts, wagons, and carriages, some of them trying to hold on to the wagons to speed up their pace.

Several of our transport wagons, including the one I was riding on, were run off the road, and our horses continued racing through the field. Suddenly we got onto a steep embankment. For a moment it seemed that we were safe. Then, to our right side, appeared a chain of soldiers who seemed to be waiting for the enemy. The officers wore White Army uniforms, but most of the soldiers wore Red Army uniforms. An idea flashed in my mind, "It must be General Drozdovsky's Third Infantry Regiment, the one he hurriedly organized almost entirely of captive Red soldiers." But after our transport wagons passed them, the soldiers stuck their bayonets in the ground and raised their hands. In no time a unit of General Budenny's Red Cavalry surrounded them, and they surrendered without a fight.

Our group of transport wagons, including mine, came up the embankment. To our left was a place called Gnyloye Boloto,⁴ where we could see that the detachments of Red Cavalry had already arrived and were fanning out to encircle us.

Suddenly a scream resounded, "We are surrounded!" All hope of escape disappeared in seconds. Drivers and soldiers jumped down from the wagons and began to run in every direction, trying to lose themselves in the chaos of running people and frightened horses pulling unattended wagons.

The irregular and sporadic gunfire, the cries of wounded men, and the savage shouts of the Red horsemen impelled me to run for cover toward one wagon that stood still. Almost unconsciously, it dawned on me that the shoulder straps on my

English field jacket were too bright. I searched the wagon for something to cover them with and found a Russian soldier's overcoat that I hurriedly donned, while quickly scanning the chaotic field.

The Red horsemen were galloping everywhere and there was no way out. A *budennyets*⁵ on a skewbald horse was galloping straight toward me. He swung his sword high above his head, its blade shining red, reflecting rays of the disappearing sun. Instinctively, I jumped under the wagon, hoping that the horses would stay put.

The *budyennyets* closed in on my wagon. His slashing sword pierced the side of the wagon and a piece of torn board fell to the ground. As I crouched under the wagon, I thought, "I am still alive! Perhaps the Red has spent his Bolshevik fury on the wagon. Perhaps he will let me live..."

The *budyennyets* cursed obscenely and then rudely shouted the order, "Come out, you, White scum!" Slowly, I came out from hiding.

"Wha-a-t are you, an *akhvitser*?"⁶ asked the *budyennyets* mispronouncing the name.

"Wha-a-t?" I asked him, mocking his pronunciation.

"*Akhvitser*?" repeated the *budyennyets* impatiently.

"Who-o? Me-e-e?" I asked him slowly, as if I were surprised to hear such a question.

The *budyennyets* cursed again, hooked his sword blade under the shoulder straps on the soldier's coat I wore, and tried to cut them off. "Climb up on the wagon! Turn it around, and drive that way!" he ordered, pointing his sword to the north.

I climbed on the wagon and slowly began to redirect the horses. The *budyennyets* galloped off in search of another victim. I slowed down the horses.

From the wagon I saw a long freight train on the railroad tracks. One of the middle cars had a black Orthodox cross on it. "The church wagon," I thought. "It must be one of our trains; the Reds don't have crosses on their cars." A small locomotive engine with steam rising from its stack was at the south end of the train. Suddenly the shunting engine with only one car attached to it, separated itself from the rest of the train and moved south, quickly increasing its speed. From the open door of the attached freight car, the rattle of a machinegun resounded. The

budyennovtsy,⁷ alarmed by the sudden machinegun fire, left the wagons with the horses and prisoners, and rushed in the direction of the runaway train.

In the confusion that followed, I took the opportunity to stop the horses, turn my wagon south, and ride as fast as the horses could carry me down the hill toward the sea. Abruptly the horses came to a stop at the edge of a steep precipice. I flew out of the wagon over the horses' bodies and rolled down the sheer sandy slope all the way to the shore of the Sivashy.

When I finally stopped rolling, my feet were buried in soft, dry sand. Down here, everything was calm, quiet, and most reassuring because no wild figures dressed in *budyennovtsy* cavalry caps were in sight.

With difficulty I got up, and, though limping because of my injured leg, started to run as fast as I could along the shore. It was hard for me to run on the uneven ground; sometimes my feet sank in the soft sand, and then, a few yards farther on, I got stuck in the muddy bottom of a swamp where I had to get into the water almost to my knees to get around the remnants of a barbed wire barrier.

When I passed the trail leading to the station, I saw people running down the slope toward the shore. I continued to run along the shoreline until I saw homes in the distance and turned onto a steep trail leading to them.

On the trail I heard running footsteps behind me; then a feeble female voice full of despair called, "Help me, in the name of God..." I looked back and saw a young woman. I ran back to her, noticing only that she was slim and wore a tight-fitting black coat with a small fur collar. In the vanishing light of the evening, I cast a few glances at my unexpected companion. Her face was flushed from emotion and fatigue. Her big blue eyes were filled with fear over what had just happened to her. She looked at me in mute appeal for help. Without a word, I grabbed her hand, and together we continued to run in silence, not knowing where to, but with redoubled hopes of saving our lives.

In the sandy hollow of the precipice *budyennovets* was taking law into his own hands, killing a clergyman; farther on another brave cavalryman was shooting an elderly White officer—and our slim hope vanished. Regrettably, we had no weapons to put a bullet in their heads! And this young woman pulled my hand

from fear—my brain searched for supernatural assistance. “How can I save her?” But those animals were so busy with their victims that they did not notice us, and we disappeared behind a protruberance in the slope.

As we climbed, the narrow trail became more solid and less steep, enabling us to run faster. After a while we saw rooftops, then small huts scattered here and there, and slowly an entire small fishermen’s village was spread out before our eyes. Probably, there were only one-dozen-and-a-half huts. As we came closer, we recognized a few *budyennovyets* on their horses, moving here and there between the huts at the opposite end of the village.

We ran to the hut closest to the trail. The door opened, as if we had been expected, and an elderly fisherman invited us into his hut without any questions. The fisherman’s wife showed us to a bench and brought us a big mug of water. “Take a short rest,” suggested the fisherman, “and I will go out and see what’s going on.” And he left us with his wife. Thirstily, we gulped all the water. I got up and went to look out the small window. The fisherman’s wife followed her husband, leaving us alone.

Suddenly the young woman began to shiver. Her face grew pale; she closed her eyes and put her fingers against her temples. I went to her and, bending over her, asked gently, “What happened?”

She slowly opened her eyes and smiled faintly, “Don’t you worry. It has already passed.” The warmth of her voice made its way to my young heart. “You are my brother, and I am Nata,” whispered the young woman.

“And I am Rostik,” I answered, not yet understanding why she had decided that we should be brother and sister. Somebody came to the door, and Nata put a silencing finger to her mouth. I pulled my tobacco box out of my pocket, put it on the table, and began to roll a cigarette.

The door squeaked and the fisherman came back inside. “Everything in the neighborhood is calm,” he said. “The Reds are at the other end of the village. You should run to that hut, now!” And through a small window, he showed me the last house to the south that was located farthest from the trail. “It will be safer for you there.” He explained, “Their son is somewhere on the front with the Whites. The old man will gladly give you refuge. My house is first on the trail—everybody comes here first. The Reds

will come to look here pretty soon. You'd better hurry, while it is still quiet over there." My young companion and I thanked the kind fisherman and his wife for their help and stepped outside.

We hurriedly made our way to our new refuge. An elderly man was standing near the door of his hut. The nets hanging on the south side of the dwelling indicated that its owner still labored at his trade despite his advanced age that was asking already to take a rest. He greeted us as though he already knew why we came. He swiftly led us into the hut and then into a second room, where no unexpected visitor could see us.

The fisherman's wife brought us two chairs and put them away from the windows near a brick nook in the chimney's wall called a stove-couch. She asked us to sit there while her husband kept watch on the movement of the Reds in the neighborhood.

We sat silently and listened attentively for a while to what was going on outside the walls of the poor hut. Then I felt the urge to smoke but remembered that I had left my tobacco box on the table at the first hut. I took off the soldier's overcoat and my cap and told Nata that I would run to get it and quickly exited.

I almost reached the first fisherman's dwelling when I saw a *budyennovyets* astride a horse behind a fence near an outhouse. The Red saw me, too, and probably noticed the bright shoulder straps on my English uniform that identified me as a White. I couldn't run, I was far from both huts, and there was no place to hide nearby. *Budyennovyets* urged his horse to jump over the fence that divided us. But the horse only pranced and was not willing to obey despite being spurred by her master.

A stream of curses poured from the Red's lips; he pulled out his revolver and began frantically shooting at me. "One, ...two, ...three, ...four, ...five..." I counted the shots, unable to move; I just stood there frozen. The horse continued to prance, and the Red couldn't take aim at me. The bullets went deep into the ground, or flew to the right or left of me, or over my head.

Suddenly, I heard a whistling sound of an approaching artillery shell and instinctively threw myself down to the ground among some dry weeds and covered my head with both hands. The close, loud explosion followed. The shelling from the peninsula began. The shell exploded only a few steps from me. When the cloud of flying soil settled, I raised my head and saw that the *budyennovyets* was lying on the ground on my side of the

fence with his arms spread out. His horse was free, running from the scene of the explosion.

I ran quickly to the first fisherman's hut. As he opened the door for me, the terrified fisherman crossed himself and said, "God, my dear God, I thought he would kill you!"

"No, it was not my time to die, yet," I answered, trying to conceal that I was scared. Then I added proudly, "But the *budyennovjets* was killed probably by the White artillery shell fired from Crimea..."

"That's what it was, that explosion?" asked the fisherman.

"I believe so," I replied and then explained why I came back: "I had to return to pick up my tobacco box; I left it on your table."

"You should be more careful," the fisherman warned. "The Reds are everywhere, and you should have at least removed the field-jacket. Those bright shoulder straps could be seen from a mile away, and the Red devils will shoot at them at once. You could have asked Vasily to get your tobacco box. They don't shoot at us fishermen so quickly as those of you in uniform."

I tried to excuse myself, "You are right, *Khosyain*,⁸ but I needed to smoke so badly that I couldn't wait!"

"This is from being agitated," explained the fisherman.

"Do you want to try my tobacco?" I offered.

"No, no, thank you very much," the fisherman readily refused. "I smoke only *makhorka*.⁹ Tobacco is not strong enough for me; it doesn't satisfy my craving for a smoke."

As we were talking, we heard more explosions. But now the shells were falling farther to the north of the fishermen's village, where most of the Reds were concentrated. I was right—the Whites were shelling from Crimea. An idea flashed in my mind: "Maybe it would be worthwhile to take advantage of the Reds' confusion and try to reach the Chongarsky Bridge now."

When I returned to the second hut, *Khosyayka*¹⁰ admonished me, "Your wife is worrying about you! Hurry and calm her down."

"My wife?" I thought, "What is this? Maybe Nata changed her idea about our being brother and sister and told them that we are husband and wife." I rushed into the other room. The anxious look in Nata's wide-opened eyes and something more than just worry greeted me. A slight smile of joy illuminated her beautiful, delicate face.

"The shell fell somewhere very close here. I wanted to run..." she said in a trembling voice.

"Run where? And why?" I questioned her, looking deep into her worried eyes, and a glimmer of hope, of something new not known before, filled my young heart.

"I wanted to make sure, if nothing bad had happened to you," Nata said softly and somewhat embarrassed.

"Yes, a White shell fell quite close to me, near the hut where we first stopped." I said it almost casually to reassure her, "But, you see, I am alive and the *budyennovyets* who was trying to shoot me is dead."

"Oh, my God! I felt that you were in danger..."

"I hurried back," I added, "to tell you about my idea. As you can hear, the White artillery from Crimea has begun shelling the Reds. They will probably pound them for a while. The Reds will be in disarray for some time. Now is a good time for us to try to sneak through without taking a big risk. I think we should make a run now for Chongarsky Bridge." It seemed that I was reasoning not only with Nata but was also trying to reassure myself that my plan was correct and it was worth it to take a chance.

"No, Rostik, we better wait until night. I am too tired and don't want to leave this safe place now," Nata pleaded.

The old fisherman overheard our discussion from the other room and stepped in. "It is too dangerous to try to reach the Chongarsky Bridge now," he said. "The Red horsemen are scouring the village. They are trying to be secure for the night."

"But staying here is even more dangerous," I replied.

"No, Rostik, we should wait!" Nata supplicated. "*Khosyayka* told me that we might stay here overnight."

I suddenly made a chivalrous decision not to leave a defenseless woman to the mercy of fate. "Well, all right, I am remaining here only for your sake."

Once the argument was settled, the old fisherman suggested to Nata and me to change our clothes. His wife opened a big trunk full of old peasant's clothing. I removed my English field jacket with the bright shoulder straps, pulled out the bottoms of the trousers tucked in the boots to cover them. *Khosyayka* found an old somewhat tightly fitting jacket and *kosovorotka*¹ for me. "It's my son's clothing," she explained.

For Nata she found a peasant's blouse and a gathered skirt.

Then she covered Nata's head with a white kerchief and skillfully tied it in a peasant style. After we changed our clothes, *Khosyayka* quickly hid my field jacket, soldier's overcoat, and peak-cap, and Nata's clothing and black coat in the bottom of the trunk, carefully covering it with the peasants' clothes. Then she left Nata and me alone in the second room, leaving the door half-open to allow a streak of faint light from a flickering oil lamp placed in the middle of the table in the kitchen, where she was cooking supper.

For a while Nata and I listened to the sounds of the exploding shells that were falling farther and farther north from the village and finally stopped.

The fisherman entered and invited us for supper. Although we did not eat the whole day, we did not feel hungry, and in one voice we thanked and declined the invitation of the generous host.

He left us again alone. The door was almost closed. We heard a calm talking and the ringing sound of dishes.

In the twilight I was silently observing Nata—a newcomer in my life—trying to read her thoughts and feelings on her face. Apparently, she was observing me, too. I felt as she were breathing in deeply the fresh air of Sivashy coming from the open small hinged opening in the window called *fortochka* and looking at me with unspoken curiosity, as if she wanted to find out more about me.

Trying to interrupt the silence and to distract myself from the heavy thoughts, I asked, "How did you get caught in this unfortunate situation?"

"Not so loud, Rostik," she warned. "They could hear us..." Then she added with a slight embarrassment, "You should get used to talking to me, as if we are...you know, husband and wife. Otherwise you might make mistakes in some dangerous situation."

"Well, I think that the danger is over...I mean, for you!"

"Let's hope you are right!" said Nata, and then tried to answer my question. "You were asking how I got here. Well, I was traveling from home to Crimea."

"Where are you from?" I asked.

"I am originally from Bachmut."

"I was asking where you are traveling from now." I clarified my question.

"A-a-a..." said Nata, like she finally understood my question. "Now I am traveling from Novo-Alexeyevka. My home is far from here; my parents remained there... And here is all very temporary... You see what is happening to us? It is better not to ask too many questions; if we get caught it would be safer."

I thought that maybe the reason she did not want to run across the bridge when I suggested it earlier was that she had decided to return to Bachmut to her parents' home.

"Do you want to wait here until the encircling is over and then return back home?" I asked. "I am from Nikitovka, and I can accompany you all the way to Bachmut." I really didn't plan to return home at that moment, but I suggested this only to find out where she really wanted to go.

"No, no, until the Bolsheviks leave, I shall never return to that town!" she answered, emphasizing the word "never."

"Why then after the Whites started the shelling didn't you want to go with me across the bridge to Crimea?" I asked.

Nata kept silent for a while like she was carefully thinking what she should answer; then she touched my hand and said, "You have heard what the fisherman told us, that it was too dangerous."

"But tomorrow it could be even more dangerous," I replied.

"Then maybe we can try it tonight?" she asked insecurely.

"No!" I said firmly. "At night I cannot risk it with you!"

"And alone?" questioned Nata.

"Alone I was ready to run an hour ago."

"Crazy! You young men, all of you are mad, ready to fly toward the danger! Many of you are perishing for this reason!"

Nata exclaimed in a manner that seemed unusual for her, as if she had been holding those words to herself for a long time and finally was able to say them aloud.

I got excited, too. "Not simply going toward the danger, but defying danger to save the Holy Russia!"

"Russia is not demanding anybody to sacrifice himself needlessly!" And Nata abruptly concluded our discussion. "We have talked enough for today." She got up and went to the door.

During our long conversation we heard that *Khosyayka* was preparing supper. The clatter of the crockery and the smell of boiled fish were tempting our hungry stomachs, and we finally realized that we'd had nothing to eat the whole day.

Through the door half-open Nata saw a young woman with a baby entering the hut.

"Good evening to you," the young woman greeted the fisherman and his wife. "I was waiting for the shelling to stop—I didn't want to scare the baby. It is all quiet now, but the Red horsemen are still going from hut to hut searching for the Whites."

"You are just in time for supper," replied *Khosyayka*.

The fisherman came to the door and, pointing at Nata, said to the young woman, "We have guests for tonight, young husband and wife." Then he invited again Nata and me to share the meal with them. This time we did not decline the invitation.

Khosyayka placed a pot with the hot fish soup, called *ukha*, and a big wooden ladle in the middle of the plain, rustic table. Beside the pot she put a round loaf of dark peasant's bread, a big knife, and a container with sea salt. The deep earthen tureens and the wooden spoons were already piled up on one side of the table. The fisherman took one tureen and served himself by scooping the big ladle of *ukha* and then passed the ladle to me, and I followed his example. Nata was next to serve herself; the fisherman's wife and daughter-in-law were the last.

Next, the fisherman cut a large slice of bread from the loaf and passed the bread and the big knife to me, and I, to Nata. When the meal was in front of each of us, the fisherman bowed his head, and all followed his example. We listened to his prayer and crossed ourselves after saying "Amen!" Then we ate in silence. No one was asking us any questions. Who, why, where we were from? It was clear that these things were better left unsaid. However, after the meal was over, the fisherman warned me, "There might be some visits by the Red horsemen, and it will be better to get ready for them."

The fisherman told me to sit on one of the three benches standing against the wall, the one farthest from the entrance door. He gave me a pair of worn-out shoes and a wooden toolbox and said, "You will be Nikolka. When some unexpected 'guests' arrive, start to remove the soles from the shoes." Then he turned to Nata and said: "And you will be..."

"Nata," she suggested promptly.

"Well, Nata, you will be the young mother." Nata nodded her head in agreement. "Mar'ya," he called his wife, who was busy

clearing the table, “adjust her kerchief, and have her sit on a bed.” Then he asked his daughter-in-law to give her baby to Nata to hold, while she herself could find something to mend.

Fisherman’s wife arranged the white kerchief on Nata’s head the way it is used by the village’s women and accommodated her on a huge family bed; daughter-in-law handed her the baby and began to sew something.

For himself the fisherman brought in from the outside some nets to repair and put them in front of the center bench next to the one where I was sitting; the other, near the door, was left empty for the ‘guests’. They did all this so quickly and efficiently that it seemed to me that they had done this before many times. It was a perfect picture of the poor fisherman’s family doing their evening chores.

We didn’t have to wait long—as soon as we sat in our places, the clatter of the horse’s hoofs was heard nearing the hut. Without knocking, one very young *budyennovyets* entered the door.

“Hul-lo, fishermen!” he greeted in a friendly manner and asked, “Do you by any chance have some Whites in here?”

“How could they be here?” answered the old fisherman calmly. “As you can see, there is hardly room for us in this small hut!”

Budyennovyets settled himself on the free bench near the door and pulled out a couple of apples from a pocket of his military coat and offered the apples to us. He proudly told us that his cavalry unit had taken those apples away from one rich Tartar farmer, who was bringing several baskets to the market in Militopol. After this explanation, we all politely refused the offer.

Budennovyets was a very talkative fellow. He was so pleased with himself, boasting about military deeds and victories of his unit—something like taking away the apples from the Tartar—he probably was talking to satisfy his own ambition and couldn’t notice that nobody was listening. All in the room were immersed in their own thoughts and fears and were waiting impatiently for him to leave the hut.

Fisherman noticed that I did not know how to work with the shoes and called, “Hey, Nikolka, put those old shoes aside. I need these nets to be repaired for the next time we go fishing. Check them out, would you!” He moved a part of the nets that he was repairing onto my knees covering my military boots that were too

obviously sticking out. I did not know how to begin the new job and aimlessly handled the nets, once in a while glancing at Nata. Sometimes she was casting her furtive glance at me, and our eyes occasionally met.

Occasionally *budyennyets* focused his eyes on Nata. Being observed by him, she felt nervous, and the fear of this close encounter with the Red soldier colored scarlet her cheeks. She kept her eyelids semi-closed and her head bent down, watching the baby in her lap. With one hand she was supporting the baby's head and with the other holding a pacifier that the sleeping baby was no longer sucking.

I watched Nata, too. Only I could understand the troubled look in her eyes and the emotional turmoil she felt at that time. To the casual observer, she was an image of a young happy mother full of tender love for her baby.

For a while my romantic imagination sidetracked me from the reality of the danger that Nata and I were in. I saw only an idyllic picture—a young Russian woman in all her glorious and exciting beauty, her exceptional charm and humility, goodness of heart, and sadness in her soul... This image was worthy to be put on canvas by the brush of the most talented painter...

At that moment I wished that there was no war and that life would continue on the old, proven path. That I was here in this poor fisherman's hut and there, on the big rustic bed, was my wife Nata holding our infant... In this poetic fancy I pictured my love and happiness with Nata.

Was it possible that poverty could break the happiness of love? It is not gold that makes people happy? There is nothing more precious on earth than all-embracing love—all world treasures are nothing compared to it! One cannot buy it or sell it, but if benevolent faith makes a gift of it, one finds great Happiness.

And then in the poor little fisherman's hut the two lives would light up with emeralds and diamonds, the sooty walls would adorn themselves with gold and silver, the poor dwelling would transform itself to a marble palace; and the Sivash would transform itself into a calm sea, boundless and with clean, clear water.

But the life now is not poetry, not a fable. Dressed in the Red Army uniform wearing a helmet with the red star, was sitting

budyennovets, one of those who were bringing ill fate on Holy Russia, the robber, killer, executioner of Russian people, who has destroyed already its millions' strong happiness.

The presence of the talkative fellow was not indifferent any more. I look in the eyes of my Nata and see in them my poor Motherland bleeding in unequal battle and I am overwhelmed with desire to sacrifice my life to save her. And I was ready to jump from the bench...

"Nikolka, find the pacifier—baby dropped it"—Nata's voice interrupted this vision and brought my thoughts to reality, sobering me from my burning desire to jump on the Red army soldier to annihilate the enemy. I picked up the pacifier from the floor. The "young mother" looked at me with worry and supplication. And I obediently returned to work on the nets.

At that moment, unaware of the tension in the room, *budyennovets* got up and saluted us, "Well, good night to all of you!" And he walked out.

The fisherman suggested that we all remain in our places for a while longer. "There could be more of 'them' coming in. They would be less suspicious if we were all here in the open. I will go outside to check what is going on." I got up, too, but the fisherman told me to stay inside and explained, "It is safer for you here; there are not too many young men remaining in the village. Some, like my son, joined the Whites, and the others are hiding from being drafted by the Reds."

In our attention to all suspicious sounds from the outside, Nata and I exchanged a few short phrases. *Khosyayka* and her daughter-in-law were talking to each other in subdued voices. The tension of waiting slowed the time. The fisherman returned and said only, "They are coming..." and returned repairing nets. I followed his example.

Momentarily, two young *budyennovets* entered the hut and greeted us, "Hul-lo! Humble fishermen!" The old fisherman answered for all of us. Then one of them said, "We are *budyennovtsy*; we are chasing the Whites and shall soon liberate the Crimea!" All in the room listened in silence.

Budyennovtsy sat on the bench, removed their guns, and began playfully to show off that they knew how to use them, and completed their show by cleaning and polishing them. They smiled jokingly at the two young women and bragged about how

they bravely “pushed the Whites into the sea.” The fisherman just nodded his head; the others listened without comment.

The fisherman noticed that I was aimlessly moving the nets and didn’t know what to do with them. He got up and told me that this could be done tomorrow in the daylight, and gave me back the old shoe, asking me to see if it could be repaired. I put the nets down on the clay floor, leaving some to cover my boots, and began to inspect carefully from all sides the old worn out shoe, as if estimating the possibilities of giving it a second life.

When the guns were finally polished, the young *budyennovtsy* asked *Khosyayka* to give them some water to drink. They looked at the large family and consulted with each other about something, nodding their heads in agreement. Then one of them told the old fisherman that, since there were too many people in this hut, they would look for some other place to stay overnight.

After the *budyennovtsy* were gone, the old fisherman told his wife to accommodate Nata and me in the next room. She came with the oil lamp and placed it on a bench. Then she took two old blankets and the pillows filled with straw from the shelf and placed them on the stove-couch that was built into the hollow wall and was heated by the stove from the other room.

“Climb up on the stove-couch,” she told us. “It will be nice and warm there, and quiet. And don’t worry—nobody can harm you here tonight. We will blow out the oil lamp soon. It is better not to have light at this hour of the night.” Then she added with a deep sigh, “I just hope that some merciful soul would give shelter to my son in his time of need.” She allowed us the time to climb on the stove-couch and wished us good night.

As she was leaving the room taking the oil lamp with her, the shadows were jumping on the walls from the moving flame. Nata pointed to one of the walls. “Look, Rostik, at that shadow, how grotesque and distorted it is; it resembles our lives...” The flame flickered, and the shadow dashed around the room, jumped toward us, and finally dissolved in the darkness.

“No, Nata,” I disagreed with her, “life is not like shadow. Yes, there are many ugly things in life, but there is much more beauty around us. It just happens that not every person can always see it and discover their beauty.”

“Do you really believe this to be true?” she asked me with doubt in her voice.

"Tell me," I asked, "do you see the beauty in yourself?"

"In myself? A beauty? Rostik, I am very ordinary, very common," she answered.

"But I can see your beauty!" I answered with ardor.

"It is too dark in here to see anything," she quick-wittedly replied.

After this not-so-subtle declaration from me, for some time we lay next to each other in silence and listened to the sounds of the night, ready at the first sign of danger to jump up and run, but... we were not sure to where. In a sign of reassurance, I took in my hand the smooth, soft hand of my unexpected "wife" and held it and stroked it. From time to time I kissed her fingers and sensed the faint scent of her skin. The spark in my heart was starting to transform into a flame. I wanted to know who had performed this imaginary matrimony. Was it Nata, who told the *Khosyayka* that we were married, or was it the fisherman or his wife who invented it to make the disguise more real? Was it just pure chance or predestination? I wanted to find out what Nata felt in her heart.

It was so hot on the stove-couch that Nata broke the silence and asked me to move to the clay floor. Quietly we put our pillows and blankets down on the cool clay. The moon was shining down through the small window, and I saw the face of Nata illuminated with a soft and mysterious light. It magically transformed my perception.

I peered at the beautiful features of her face, her sparkling eyes, outlined with long eyelashes and fine eyebrows, at her neat contours of half-open lips, reminding me of the petals of the opening rosebud. Her youth and freshness infatuated me, and her beauty cast a spell upon my whole being.

The spark in my heart flared up passions into unstoppable fire, and it seemed that we would burn that night in the flames of great love.

Nata was silent. Was she awaiting words or silent caresses, was she thinking about the past or the future, was she seeking the solution from the impossible, was she deciding to accept the happy chance for saving herself, was she thinking at that moment about me, or were her thoughts far away in the steppes of Tavriya? I don't know, but the flame of great candid feeling burst out, and I passionately pressed my lips against her lovely little

lips...

I started to kiss her tenderly, stroke gently her silky hair, murmured magic words; and gently caressed her with adoration, like she was a precious and delicate statuette made of finest china. And I felt that she reciprocated with sincere feminine joy...

We were burning with desire. For a few moments we forgot who we were and why we were there in that poor fisherman's hut. The terrible day endured by us was melting away in the flame of youthful love and mysterious distance of oblivion... And we could have burned in the spontaneous ocean of our passion, when... Suddenly, Nata heartbrokenly whispered, "Rostik, my dear, I am married..."

As I heard those words, I got up at once. It was past midnight. The moon was shining through the window like before, but its magic had disappeared. I felt defeated. A beautiful dream of happiness that had overwhelmed me for only a few hours was crushed in a thousand pieces, and the sharp fragments were piercing my heart and painfully penetrating in my soul. It felt like many wounds in my body were bleeding, leaving physical pain in the whole body. I felt chilly, terribly tired, and surrounded by emptiness.

But I wanted to convey my gratitude to sweet Nata for those few miraculous moments of happiness that she'd bestowed on me. On my knees I bent over her and saw the tears shining in her eyes. I kissed her tenderly on the cheek and said, "Forgive me, Nata, I didn't know, I didn't even guess."

"And I, Rostik, couldn't tell you before," she answered gently. "But our passion would have brought us too far. It would not have been right. I love my husband."

I reassured her, "Nata, don't you worry—I understand. You are trying to join him. I will be very happy if I could help you get out of here. I will not leave you until we reach Crimea."

Somebody cautiously knocked at the entrance door to the hut. Fisherman probably was not asleep. He opened the door without questioning. I got up and opened slightly the door to the other room. I saw the fisherman opening the door, and a tall, stately man in White military uniform quietly entered the room. In a low voice he asked if the fisherman could help him change his uniform into civilian clothing. I understood that it was safe and opened the door. The men trembled.

"Don't worry. I have already changed my clothes, but didn't dare run across the bridge yet with my wife," I explained to him and presented myself.

The man replied, "I am General Popov, the Chief of the Red Cross." And he added with urgency in his voice, "Please, help me. I want to run across the Chongarsky Bridge tonight. I want to reach Crimea before dawn."

The fisherman started to pull out the old clothing of the big trunk to find a jacket that would fit the general. The night was very cold, and I offered the general the soldier's overcoat with cut off shoulder straps.

"I guess that it is better to be caught dressed as a soldier, than as a general," he commented jokingly. "In any case, I could always throw it into the Sivashy." He took off a golden ring from his finger and handed it to the old fisherman.

"God, forbid!" exclaimed the fisherman. "I will not take it! You better hurry! We will pray to God that He protects you."

But the general put the ring on the trunk, saying, "Well, then save it for me. If I get safely to Crimea, I will not need it. If the Reds capture me, they will take it from me; anyway, it is safer if I leave it with you."

The General entrusted me with his wallet, containing documents and money, asking me to contact him at the command post as soon as I got to Dzhanikoy.

The fisherman and I wished the general good luck, and he walked swiftly south toward the road to Sivashy.

In a few minutes we heard again the same careful knocking. The fisherman, again without asking, opened the door. A large broad-shouldered man entered, and it seemed that he filled the entire room. This time it was a colonel, whose family name, regrettably, I don't remember. He also asked to help him to change to civilian clothing. This time it was harder to help him, because there were no items of his size. With great difficulty, we helped him to pull up some old slacks and a warm jacket. On his head he put a visor-cap offered by the fisherman. The night guest, changed into a poor muzhik, left, following the footsteps of the general.

Some officers and soldiers followed, but the fisherman was so resourceful that he was able to disguise them, so that no one could recognize them as military men. I was delighted with this

Russian Christian soul, who probably had saved the lives of many men.

The golden sunrays were beginning to pierce through the light band in the east. The new day began. Worrisome thoughts were pouring like a stream one after another. I was trying to find a way to save Nata. I was sitting next to her and admiring her beautiful but somewhat pale and tired face. I was whispering, "Even if it would cost me my life, I will save you, I will break you loose from the deadly encirclement. You will find your husband again, and the Lord would bless you with a happy life..."

Nata was lying with closed eyes, but she was not asleep. She was listening to my ravings, ravings of a madman, intoxicated, stricken by the great emotion. She opened her eyes and asked, "And you?"

"I? I don't know, Nata. A woman like you, I probably would never encounter in my life. I would never get to know such love. If I'm destined to remain alive, your name would remain holy for me and in my prayers. I would always pray to the Almighty that he would protect you from evil."

"Let's go outside," she asked me, "I need to sober a little after sleepless night, and it is stuffy in the room."

We walked out dressed in peasants' clothing. The bright rays of morning sun were caressing Nata's pale and tired face, which seemed even more beautiful to me than in the moonlight last night, and I was grateful to destiny, who had sent me such happiness to be near her, to hear for a while the peaceful melody of her voice, to feel her breath full of emotion.

Early in the morning it was quiet; it seemed that everything was lying still in a deep sleep. Nobody was around. We walked to the slope toward the Sivashy to explore what was going on. There was no sign either of *budyennovtsy* or of Whites.

Standing at the edge of a sandy slope I was looking at the white line of the road leading toward the Crimea.

"Maybe, now?" asked Nata.

"Not yet—we have to be sure. I have no right to put your life in jeopardy."

"But when? There is nobody around now," she prompted me.

"I think that we will find out very soon. If the Whites last night brought the artillery into a position to reach beyond the village, they must have prepared the defenses by now," I said with an air

of complete confidence.

Here, from the high ground, I could observe the narrow, sandy serpentine road leading to Crimea. "Nata," I said, "look at the road. Do you see the ditches on both sides of it? Those are gutters for the rainwater." Then I explained, "Well, we have to follow the road for quite a while until we reach the Chongarsky Bridge. If there is an exchange of fire or if somebody shoots at us, don't run on the road; get down in the ditch and if necessary lie down and crawl or creep. Stay close to me, and listen to what I may tell you." I warned Nata what could happen during the escape, while I considered all possible alternatives from the advantageous height. "I think that we have a good chance to reach Crimea," I concluded.

We returned to the fisherman's hut. With the tension of waiting, time passed painfully, slowly. After midday the White artillery began firing again, the shells falling far beyond the village. The fisherman meanwhile collected information from the others in the village that all *budyennovtsy* had left during the night.

I made a decision—now was the right time to attempt our escape. In a commanding voice, I called, "Nata, get ready! It's time to go!" Then I asked the fisherman, "*Khosyain*, could we please have our clothing back? I will feel safer dressed in my uniform."

The fisherman pulled my English field jacket and peak-cap out of his trunk. Nata had put on her town clothing and her black coat. As the fisherman was placing his old clothing back in the big trunk, he reasoned, "If tonight we have more guests who need to change from White uniforms, we can dress one more to look like a fisherman."

Nata and I expressed our gratitude to the fisherman and his wife for their hospitality, for giving us a refuge in their fisherman's hut, for the food they shared with us, and for saving our lives. I said, "We don't have anything valuable to give you for all your trouble."

"God forbid, we don't want anything from you!" said the fisherman.

And his wife replied, "Any mother would have done the same hoping that her son would be treated well by some other mother."

Nata embraced *Khosyayka* and said she wished her that her son

would return home safely and soon. The fisherman gave us his blessings for the road. And we quickly left toward the road for Chongar.

As we walked out of the hut, Nata commented, "What a simple and kind people we still have in Russia! They didn't ask us to pay for anything they offered. They helped us just because we needed it."

"And who knows how many others they will help tonight... and tomorrow... and the day after tomorrow," I added.

As we reached the road to Chongar, we could see the railroad and the Chongarsky Railroad Bridge, which went straight across the Sivashy from the mainland to Crimea. We needed to make a run on that bridge, and we ventured out on the road that led to it. From the road we could see that there were no guards on this side of it, and that was a good sign that the Reds were probably not there.

This deduction relaxed our caution and almost became fatal. The sound of bullets over our heads made us duck, jump into the ditch, and run, bending forward. Nata was breathing heavily, and I was afraid she would fall behind. I grabbed her hand and tried to pull her close to me. A machinegun rattled, and bullets hit the pavement slightly ahead of us. I ordered Nata to lie down in the ditch. Then hoping that the shots were not fired by the Reds, I decided to gamble and to show a sign of surrender. I took a white handkerchief from my pocket, tied it around my cap, and raised it above the level of the road. The machinegun stopped its rattle, and we proceeded, creeping low to the ground.

All of a sudden, the ditch became wider and deeper, and we found ourselves in a recently made deep trench. "Just a little further. I think that they noticed us... Be calm, we are already saved," I reassured her. Nata was breathing heavily and was trying not to fall behind, fearing to slow down our progress forward. Suddenly we hear a warning, "Stop! Who is there?" A sentinel appeared with the gun pointed toward me. We both recognized each other's White uniforms. The sentinel called for his officer, and I reported my rank and my brigade.

"The name of your commander?" insisted the officer. I answered. "And who is she?" pointing at Nata, asked the officer again.

"I am an officer's wife," answered Nata for herself in a

decisive manner. "My husband is..." and she turned her face away from me and whispered to the officer the name and the division of her husband. Then pointing at me, she explained in a normal voice, "He is accompanying me. We are trying to go across the bridge."

"Please, Madam, you may go safely through the trench. Farther on, there is a no-man's land, and you will be on your own. Good luck!" Then he gave a command to his soldiers, "Let these people pass!"

We walked through the very short trench guarded only by a half-dozen soldiers. The trench ended in the natural hollow in the sandy soil. After that, all the way toward the Chongarsky Bridge was really a no-man's land.

My contused leg that had improved during my stay at the fisherman's hut started to hurt again. It was becoming dark when we reached the bridge.

Chongarsky Railroad Bridge had a very narrow walk with wide gaps between the planks, and we had to be careful to step in the right spot. The strong northerly wind threatened to blow us off into the water. I wore only my light English field jacket and froze all the way through to the bones. Nata's coat could not protect her from the frigid wind, and she was shivering at each sharp blow. But she was trying not to show that she was freezing. We held on to each other, I helped her to keep steady balance, and she helped me not to slip down with my lame leg. It seemed we would never reach the far end of the bridge. Nata would ask me once in a while, "How far do we have to go?" When we finally stepped on solid ground, we embraced each other with relief. Only then we realized that it was already dark, and the friendly moon illuminated our way.

My leg by now had become swollen, and I was dragging it on the ground. I was leaning on Nata's arm, and she gave me as much support as her strength allowed her. After midnight we reached a small farmstead with a few peasants' huts clustered together. Unsuccessfully we tried to find a place to warm up and take a rest. All huts were full of people sleeping on the floor all the way to the entrance doors. Finally, we stumbled on a very small structure that turned out to be a summer kitchen. The red flickering could be seen in the big kitchen stove. A faint moonlight was barely penetrating through the small window, but

it was enough to find a small empty bench, and we sat close to the open stove door. We began to revive the fire by adding straw and warmed up our frozen bodies. But the rude swearing of the soldier sleeping on top of the stove forced us to abandon that place. It seems that in the darkness we did not see him and almost roasted him.

Checking into several other huts, we finally found one which seemed to us to be empty. Faint moonlight hardly penetrated through the small windows, but it was enough to see the poor environment. On the right stood a long, narrow bench, on the left—a big peasant's stove, from which blew warmth onto us that our half-frozen and tired bodies needed. We quietly moved the bench closer to the stove, curled up close to each other, and fell asleep; abandoning ourselves to the warmth and to a liberating feeling of safety from the Reds, we lay down, enjoying warmth, silence, and tranquility.

I don't know if we slept or simply lost consciousness, finally feeling safe. But, at the first light of daybreak, we awoke at the same time and heard the heavy breathing of many people in that small structure that had filled to capacity during the night. There was no room left on the earthen floor. Nata and I carefully walked between the sleeping people and went out into the courtyard.

Outside we encountered a sharp morning chill. On the horizon the sun was just starting to show its first rays, promising warmth during the day. Nata and I decided to walk southwest on the wide, unpaved cart road leading toward the railroad station. As we walked along the road, we could see the salty Crimean steppe become multicolored with the groups of refugees. All were rushing in the same direction toward the railroad station and the small town. There they were hoping to find information about the front, and maybe to find transportation toward the larger centers of population, where they could more easily disappear in the crowd if the Whites could not stop further advancement of the Reds.

All the way we were talking, but about what? I don't know. I only know that the crossing of Chongarsky Bridge started to show up on my leg, so swollen I could barely put my weight on it. I felt feverish and was shivering, although it was quite warm in the sun. I felt that I could lose consciousness at any time, and Nata was worrying about me. When with her help I managed to reach

the station of Taganash, I could barely understand all that Nata was telling me.

I remember only that she told someone that she was an officer's wife and that she was trying to reach him. As if in a fog, I heard her voice requesting somebody on the station's medical unit to place me in a hospital in Dzhankoy.

I remember her saying, "Good-bye, Rostik!" And my last attempt was to follow her with my eyes as she left. Nata, the young woman who suddenly appeared in my life and awakened in me the flame of first love and gave me a few hours of happiness.

I frantically screamed, "Nata, don't go away!" And then I lost consciousness.

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1. The so-called Salty Sea, east of Perikop.
 2. See "Volunteers" and "After the Battle."
 3. A town located north of Perikop.
 4. The Putrid Swamp.
 5. *Budyennovyets*—a soldier in the Red Cavalry Division of Bolshevik General Budyenny.
 6. The word "offitser" (officer) as mispronounced by populace.
 7. Plural of "*budyennovyets*."
 8. The host of the house.
 9. Shag—a coarsely shredded home-grown tobacco.
 10. The hostess of the house.
 11. A Russian shirt with a side fastening and a stand-up collar.
 12. Small hinged casement windowpane used for ventilation.



A Defeat in Crimea

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

After I escaped the encirclement of the Reds, I managed to reach and cross the Chongarsky Bridge with a companion in misfortune, Nata, a White officer's wife who was trying to reach her husband in Crimea.¹

The crossing of Chongarsky Bridge was too much of an effort for my injured leg that became swollen. And only with the help of Nata I was able to reach the station of Taganash. I just remember as in the fog her voice requesting somebody on the station's medical unit to place me in a hospital in Dzhankoy.

After I was kept a few days in the small railroad hospital on the station of Taganash, the fever diminished, and my leg slightly improved, but I had not regained complete consciousness and finally was transferred to the larger military hospital in Dzhankoy. There, I gradually began to perceive what was going on around me. The sounds of artillery fire were moving closer and closer to Dzhankoy. Still half-conscious, I pricked up my ears, "Where is it coming from?" My previous experience and training put my senses on full alert, and listening to the other wounded soldiers' comments and observing what they were doing put me on the lookout.

One day, I saw that those sick and wounded who were able to walk began to get up from their beds, hurriedly dress, and walk toward the hospital exit. Like in a dream, I followed their example and got to the railroad station. On my way I heard the comments of the fleeing wounded who were saying, "The battle for Crimea could be considered already lost. It will be the same catastrophe as it was in Novorossiysk, where hundreds of officers, soldiers, and refugees were not able to get to the ships on time and were taken as prisoners by the Reds, who cruelly executed them without any trial." I understood that it was time for me to take a train to Feodosia and winter out in my Uncle Pyetr's home.

When I reached the railroad station of Dzhankoy, there was

already a multitude of people gathered on the station platform, and I learned the Reds had already interrupted the railroad and that no trains were going south from there. I decided that walking alone was safer than together with other sick and wounded soldiers. I chose to follow the railroad tracks that would lead me in the right direction. With my lame leg I walked slowly but steadily without much rest. I was trying to gain some distance from the Reds before my leg became swollen again and forced me to stop for a longer rest.

When I found myself in the vicinity of the railroad station of Grammatikovo, my leg was so swollen that I could no longer walk. I stopped at the railway switch-point and asked the switchman to let me sleep overnight in his cabin. As a reference I told him that I was a nephew of Pyetr Makarovitch Gladky, a stationmaster in Feodosia. But it became clear that this reference had backfired; the plate switchman didn't want anything to do with harboring the old master's relatives, as the Reds could be here at any time. I pleaded with him, but to no avail. Then I gave him an ultimatum: "I cannot walk anymore; if you don't let me in, I will sleep right here in front of your door." And I sat down on the steps. After a while the switchman's wife came out, invited me inside, gave me some water to drink, and showed me to the bench, where she put an old blanket.

Early in the morning, I started to walk toward the small town of Old Krym, located about one hundred-fourteen *verst* from the station of Dzhankoy. My paternal grandparents lived there, and I was planning to stop there for several days to rest my leg before proceeding to Feodosia. It took me several days to get there, stopping to stay overnight at the railroad stations. To feed myself I bartered my military boots, which I could not wear anyway with my swollen leg, for an old pair of larger size shoes, some bread, and dry fruit.

By late afternoon I came to my grandparents' home. Reds had not reached the town of Old Krym yet. My grandfather, Makar, was glad to see me, and we talked at length about the situation in Crimea and about the options I had for the near future. My grandmother, Yelena, was less impressed with my arrival, especially when the time came to feed me. She served the meager supper that was already prepared for the two of them, and they had to divide it now with me. The food consisted of a watery

soup with a few pieces of vegetables swimming in it that she said were left from what they grew in the summer in their garden. Then she carefully divided a handful of small pieces of dry bread in three parts to soak in the soup. After many days of being hungry and eating only stale bread and dry fruit, I ate the hot soup with pleasure. Grandmother Yelena was afraid that I would stay with them for long time and that they would have to feed me. She complained openly and profusely at the table that they did not have enough to eat for themselves, making me feel guilty for depriving them of food.

The next morning, grandmother didn't get out of bed and was moaning and complaining of being sick. I suggested to Grandfather that he call a doctor. But he just waved his hand in a sign of resignation, telling me that this was one of her old tricks that she uses when things are not going as she wants them to be. I understood that my grandmother didn't want me to stay and told Grandfather that I was leaving right away that morning to stay with my Uncle Pyetr. After all, there were only about twenty-five miles left to Feodosia. There I hoped that my uncle could keep me in his home for a while and feed one more mouth, which my grandparents could not afford, because the food and their resources were scarce.

In the middle of November, 1920, I finally reached my last refuge in Crimea, my Uncle Pyetr's home. At that time the town was still in the hands of Whites.

After the death of his first wife, Pyetr Makarovitch Gladky married Alexandra Ivanovna Tsarinova. They lived with their small daughter Xenia, and the two children from his first wife, a son Boris, who was about seven years old, and a daughter Lidia, about twelve years old. Pyetr Makarovitch was the railroad stationmaster in Feodosia and was receiving good food rations at that time. I found his wife to be a very pleasant woman, and she was good to her stepchildren and to me. There were no objections from her to keep me in their home for as long as it was necessary.

By the time I reached Feodosia, there was no more organized resistance against the Reds by the Whites, who were in complete disarray and escaping on any available ship to Turkey, Rumania, and Greece. Then came the news that the Reds were closing in on Feodosia. Although this was expected for some time, it started confusion and panic; there were not enough ships to take all the

White officers and soldiers who were waiting to embark. All were trying to escape the horrible executions, for which the Reds had become notorious everywhere, but in Crimea they were especially cruel because of the large concentration of White officers. In addition, the towns were full of refugees who, escaping from the Reds, had evacuated with their families from the northern parts of the country to Crimea.

Thousands of people were rushing about on the pier in Feodosia seeking salvation from the Reds. But in vain. The ships were standing far away on the roadstead and there was no way to reach them. Fear and despair seized everyone, anticipating savage reprisal that seemed not possible to escape. The fears of these people became a horrifying reality when the Reds occupied Feodosia and all other towns in Crimea.

When I realized that one couldn't get from the dry land to the ships, I was wandering on the narrow streets of the town. I went to the harbor, looked at the port, observing closely women's faces. I was searching, I was calling that woman, who in the last day of my fight for Motherland had burst into my life and became a symbol of victory over Evil. But she was gone, taking with her the idea of my White fight on the Russian soil... Was she gone forever? "Nata, where are you??"



PART THREE

The Bolsheviks Seize Power



Bolsheviks in Feodosia

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

After the Reds occupied Feodosia,¹ the infamous CheKa² began its bloody work of searching out and eliminating the White officers and soldiers who had the misfortune of finding themselves at the southern shore of Crimea too late to embark on the ships to Turkey, Rumania, Bulgaria, or Greece. There were no trials; CheKa was executing them by firing squad on the shore of the Black Sea.

During the first weeks CheKa didn't touch the local people and concentrated on non-residents, whom they considered to be either White officers dressed in civilian clothing or refugees who had escaped from the northern part of the country. Most of these people were suspected to be White sympathizers and anti-revolutionary elements; all were referred to by one all-encompassing name, "enemies of the people," which really meant the enemies of the Bolsheviks. These people were taken by the CheKa agents from homes, caught at the railroad station, or arrested on the streets, and they usually disappeared without a trace.

One night, I found a wounded man hiding in my uncle's outhouse. My Uncle Pyetr took him in the house and helped him to bandage the wound. The man told us that he was arrested in the railroad station and was taken with others to the seashore and shot. He fell unconscious on the ground, and when he had regained his consciousness, he realized that he was only wounded in the leg. He stayed quietly in the pile of dead men until the executioners were gone. Then he got out from under the corpses that had been left on the shore to be removed by the night crew. When darkness fell over the macabre scene and he could hear only the sound of the waves landing on the shore, he crawled on the sidewalk and against the fences and houses until he found refuge here. The man was grateful for our help, and he left right away to hide elsewhere.

Later Pyetr Makarovich found out from the underground-railroad-news what was happening in the other stations, where the CheKa began to conduct a purge of the railroads' employees—the cleanup of this important communication and transport system from all possible “enemies of the people.” There, the CheKa agents were investigating all employees who occupied any position higher than a simple laborer or worker. Everywhere all old stationmasters were removed from their posts for no reason, were interrogated, arrested, and thrown into jails, and some disappeared. Their families could not get any information from the CheKa about what had happened to their loved ones.

Therefore, when one day the CheKa agents came to the railroad stationmaster office and gave Pyetr Makarovich a summons to appear the next day in the local CheKa, he understood that he couldn't remain one more hour in Feodosia. As soon as they were gone, he asked his assistant stationmaster to take over his duties and returned home unexpectedly in the middle of his shift. He told his surprised wife that he had to go on an urgent *komandirovka*, which meant a trip on employment-related matters, and that he probably would be away for a few days. Very casually he said “goodbye” to her and to his children and asked me to see him off as far as a few blocks from his home.

On our way to the railroad station he told me the whole story about the summons and that he was escaping to Kharkov, where he had friends he could rely upon. He asked me to tell his wife about the summons only after a few weeks had gone by, and that I absolutely should not tell her where he would be hiding, because the CheKa agents knew how to get such information from the wives. “Tell her,” he said, “when the time is right, I myself will let her know where I am and what she and the children should do to reach me.” My uncle embraced me and asked me to help his family to go through the difficult times ahead of them. Then he looked at his watch and abruptly said, “It's time to go! I will arrive at the station just in time for the freight train going north.”

Without any luggage that could make his departure too suspicious, he got on the first freight train going north. The old regulations hadn't changed yet, and as a railroad employee he could travel without being questioned as long as he was wearing his railway uniform and had his pass.

I remained with his family and followed my uncle's instructions of not telling his wife anything until later. The next day, early in the morning, two young CheKa agents came to search Pyetr Makarovich's home. From their behavior I deduced that they didn't know yet that he had escaped.

The agents dug in all drawers, looking for anything that could compromise him. They piled some papers and documents on his desk, and among them I recognized one of my letters. I was terrified, because I knew what was written in it. I had written it soon after I got to the front, and it was an inspiring letter full of youthful hope for the speedy victory of the Whites against the Reds. I looked at my Aunt Alexandra and made a sign with my eyes and indicated with my head to get the agents out of the room. My aunt got the message, went to the kitchen, and from there cleverly invited the agents to have a cup of tea with her own homemade cherry jam. The trick worked out well. While my aunt was serving the tea in the kitchen, I quickly removed the letter from the pile and gave it to Varya, the niece of Alexandra Ivanovna, who hid it in her bosom. When the CheKa agents were gone, I got my letter back from Varya and destroyed the incriminating evidence.

After the escape of my uncle, my aunt was not able to receive her husband's food rations and could not provide for her children. I began to look for some kind of work to support myself and to help my uncle's family. Through the friends of my uncle I found a position as a telegrapher at the small railroad station of Saryhol, located not far from Feodosia.

However, I didn't have a chance to work there for long. On the third night, when I was working on the third shift, I answered a telephone call, and a man asked me with the voice of official sternness, "Who is speaking?"

"I am a telegrapher," I answered very calmly, but my heart began to beat faster.

"What is your last name?" insisted the man.

I began to suspect that something unpleasant was coming up and reluctantly but still calmly answered, "My name is Gladky."

"Well, Gladky, come tomorrow morning to the CheKa Office," he ordered.

Now I knew that I should expect some trouble. But I answered in a steady voice, "Very well, I will come as soon as the first-shift

telegrapher comes in."

I thought about it. "How serious could it be? Maybe it is about my Uncle Pyetr." And I planned and rehearsed all night what I would answer to all kinds of questions they could ask.

In the morning, I went to the CheKa Office. The CheKa agent by the name of Koshyrin began to interrogate me. He wanted to know where I came from and what I was doing here, and where my uncle was. It helped me that during the night I carefully planned my biography and told it in a relaxed tone of voice:

"I came from Nikitovka to Feodosia to visit my uncle. Here I caught a typhoid fever. When I got well, there were no more trains going north, and I couldn't go home. Now I have found a place to work and want to stay here because I like the climate."

As for my uncle, I said, "He left on *komandirovka* and disappeared. Nobody knows what happened to him."

As I was telling my story, it became clear Koshyrin was not convinced I was telling him the truth because he arrested me. I was confined in the cellar for about two weeks, and during that time Koshyrin interrogated me every day. Each time he asked me to tell him my biography I repeated the same story. During those two weeks in prison I saw many White officers and soldiers being led from the CheKa prison to be shot on the seashore. It was clear that I could not change my story if I wanted to remain alive.

After the two weeks Koshyrin did let me go, but he instructed that I come back in a few weeks for further check-up. I resumed my work at the telegraph, and when I returned for the check-up, Koshyrin asked me to watch and listen to the employees at the station and to report to him in person about any anti-Bolshevik individual. I thought that maybe Koshyrin had really believed my story, and even begun to trust me, because the next time I came for a check-up, I had an offer from him to take care of one farmstead. But I told him I was not used to that kind of work and would not know what to do there. However, I was very cautious with Koshyrin. I felt that in his CheKa agent's mind there might be only seconds separating trust from execution. Soon I decided, "It's time to go!"

I began to look for the first occasion to get on the freight train to get out of Crimea and told my Aunt Alexandra about it. At that time my aunt had received a message from my grandmother Yelena through the railroad telegrapher, who was my Uncle

Pyetr's good friend. She was notifying the only son who was living close to her about the death of his father and was expecting him to come and help her with the funeral. Since my uncle was hiding in Kharkov, I immediately went to Stary Krym and helped my grandmother to arrange the simple funeral.

She was very upset that her son didn't come and that none of her other children could be notified because there were no regular means of communication with the mainland. Therefore, I was the only one representing the whole Gladky family. Only a few neighbors of my grandfather came to say goodbye. But my grandfather had a funeral that he would have wanted, with the traditional Russian Orthodox rites. The Bolsheviks hadn't had time yet to close the churches in Crimea and to arrest all the clergymen.

Knowing my grandmother's stinginess, I offered her what I had saved from my wages to pay for my grandfather's funeral and told her that she had to pay the rest herself because it was all that I had. After the funeral, I told my grandmother that she should remain in her own home until her son Pyetr returned from up north, or until my father or her daughter Marusya could come and help her to make a decision about her future. I told her that I should depart soon to Nikitovka and would notify my father about his father's death. She wanted to know how soon somebody would come, but since I couldn't give her an answer, I only said, "As soon as they can."

When, in the spring of 1921, my grandfather Makar Timofyeyevich Gladky died during the famine, he was ninety-six years old. He had outlived the four Tsars, Nicolas I, Alexander II, Alexander III, and Nicolas II. Later, within the family his children used to say that their father probably would have lived even longer if their mother hadn't starved him to death because she was not sharing fairly with him the little food that they could find.

One day in March of 1921, I was scouting around the railroad station in Feodosia trying to find out how I could get on one of the freight trains. By chance, I encountered a former stationmaster of Nikitovka, Marcely Tytovich Gasnyevsky. Before the Reds occupied the station of Nikitovka, he had evacuated with his family to Crimea by attaching his railroad freight car to the last train going south with the retreating troops of the White Army.

Since his arrival to Feodosia, he had been living in the same

car on the remote and no longer used sidetracks of the station. When the Reds occupied the town, for a while he was paying the railroad workers to keep them quiet about his being there. He and his family stayed mostly inside and kept the car doors closed. They came out only to get water and his wife went to the market in town to barter some clothing for food.

When the CheKa agents began searching everywhere for the “enemies of the people,” Gasnyevsky had no other choice but to move as quickly as possible back north and to try to disappear in one of the large cities, where he hoped no one would know him. His destination was the city of Kharkov. Marcely Tytovich was a very good friend of my father with whom he worked for many years, and he gladly offered to accommodate me in his freight car, almost as a member of his family, and told me to move in right away and to wait with them. I told my aunt “goodbye” and left my uncle’s home.

Gasnyevsky was able to find some of his friends, railroad employees, who would arrange that his freight car would be attached to the freight train going north. Early in the morning the day of the departure, the locomotive engineer checked with Marcely Tytovich to see if everybody was in the car and told him to be very quiet until the train departed from the station, no matter how long it took. Then he wished him good luck, closed the car door, locked it, and maneuvered the car on the sidetracks until he attached it at the very end of the freight train.

Before departure, we heard the voices of the men walking along the train and banging on the doors of cars as they came closer and closer. We all sat quiet without moving. Then we heard somebody come to our car and bang several times at the door. We all kept so quiet, that one could not even hear our breathing. At last we heard the whistle of a conductor and the train started to move slowly. Finally, when it was going at its full speed, everybody took a deep breath.

At the first unscheduled stop between the stations, the locomotive engineer came to open the car door and asked if everybody was all right. I saw Gasnyevsky give the engineer a handful of gold coins. The train stopped many times near the villages, giving time to the passengers for bartering clothing for food. During these stops I saw that, although officially it was a freight train, several cars full of passengers traveling north were

attached at the end. When the train stopped at the stations, Marcely Tytovich would not get out of the car for fear of being recognized by railroad employees. He would ask me to fill the buckets with water, or to buy a newspaper.

When the train reached the station of Losovaya, there the rail line from Crimea joined the Southern Railroad line that went directly to the station of Nikitovka, it was time for me to say goodbye to the host family and head for home. However, on the advice of Marcely Tytovich, I did not return directly to Nikitovka, where everyone knew that I had volunteered into the White Army. Instead, I deviated to a single-track railroad branch leading from Nikitovka to Papasnaya and farther north. I decided to stop at a small station, Belyayevka,³ where my aunt Marusya, my father's sister, was living. Her husband, Nikandr Yakovlyevich Myedvyedyev, had been a stationmaster there for many years. I hoped that they knew what was going on in Nikitovka. From there I could also communicate with my father through the railroad telegraph, or by sending him a message with some railroad conductor or locomotive engineer of a train passing through Belyayevka.

1. See chapter "A Defeat in Crimea."

2. CheKa—acronym for *Chresvychaynaya Kommissiya*, The Extraordinary Commission that acted as secret police against counterrevolutionaries from 1917 to 1921.



Nikandr Yakovlyevich Myedvyedyev

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

The small railroad station of Belyayevka, located near the village of the same name, was on a single-track railroad branch leading from Nikitovka to Papasnaya and farther north. The trains going in the opposite direction waited there for the right of way on the short span of a double-track. Nikandr Yakovlyevich Myedvyedyev, the stationmaster of Belyayevka, was a husband of Maria Makarovna Gladky, my Aunt Marusya on my father's side. On my way home from Crimea, I decided to stop there and to test the situation in Nikitovka, to see if it was safe for me to return home.

As a young boy I occasionally went to visit my Aunt Marusya and remember going fishing with my Uncle Nikandr and his two sons. Knowing what happened to Gasnyevsky, the former railroad stationmaster of Nikitovka, and to my Uncle Pyetr Makarovich Gladky, the former stationmaster in Feodosia, I thought, "They were stationmasters of the big important railroad stations. But who would bother with the small fish like my Uncle Nikandr? And the tiny station of Belyayevka? What kind of strategic importance could it have to the Bolsheviks?" I was pretty sure that I would find everything there almost as it was before the Revolution.

As I remember, at the station of Belyayevka there were two small buildings. One was the station itself with a small apartment for the janitor, and the other was a house with apartments for the families of the stationmaster and the two assistant clerks. And there were a lot of sheds, too, because they all had cows, horses, pigs, geese, hens, ducks, and dogs, and ever so many cats. They lived pretty well. The working hours for the stationmaster and his clerks were more than wonderful, twenty-four hours on duty and then forty-eight hours off. As for the janitor, he worked only eight

hours a day, and at nights and on Sunday he was free to do just what he liked.

I remember that Nikandr Yakovlyevich was an important man in the village because he had two assistant clerks and a janitor under him. Everyone knew him well and respected him. In the old days in the Ukrainian villages everyone knew the governmental officials and employees and respected them, especially if they were friendly like Nikandr Yakovlyevich.

Nikandr Yakovlyevich lived almost like his two good friends the landowners, whose manors were in the vicinity of the station. He loved fishing and hunting. There were no rivers in the neighborhood, but on the landowners' estates there were lakes full of carp, fat and lazy, and very tasty, especially with sour cream.

The landowners were good-natured and often invited Nikandr Yakovlyevich to keep them company.

One of them would say, "Look, Nikandr Yakovlyevich, how about those carp? It's no longer a lake—it's nothing but fish soup."

And the other of them would drop a hint about the hares. "What about that gun of yours, Nikandr Yakovlyevich—it is lying idle as a neglected orphan. I can get you some small shot and powder from Kharkov. You will get some pleasure and a good dinner on top of that, and you will be doing me a favor, too. The hares did a lot of damage to the trees last winter."

And he had many more invitations of that sort. That's how in the good old days my uncle told me he lived.

When I arrived at the station of Belyayevka, the first person I saw was the janitor. He was sitting on the steps of the station and leisurely smoking a *makhorka* cigarette, hand-rolled from a piece of paper torn from the Bolshevik newspaper. The old janitor didn't recognize me right away, probably because I had changed so much since my last visit as a youth to see my Aunt Marusya and Uncle Nikandr. I had to explain to him that I was indeed Nikandr Yakovlyevich's nephew from Nikitovka.

"Oy-oy-oy, is it really you, Rostik?" said the old janitor, who was surprised to see me so grown-up. "Oh, my dear boy, I have to tell you very bad news about your uncle." And seeing the expression of concern on my face he quickly added, "No, no! Don't get too upset, he is alive, they are all alive. But, you see,

those *chekists*⁴ have ruined your uncle—they didn't give him his old job back. Only the three of us have been left to make this station work..."

And the old janitor explained to me how to find my uncle at his new home. They lived now in the village of Alekseyevka located close to the station of Likhachevo, on the same single-track railroad branch about twenty miles from the station.

When I arrived in the village I found the whole family outside tending the chores. Uncle Nikandr sat with me on a bale of straw near the cow shed and told me the whole story of what had happened to him since the Reds arrived in Belyayevka. My uncle recounted his story with a sense of humor, which I will try my best to remember.

By 1920, it became clear to Nikandr Yakovlyevich that the Bolsheviks had the upper hand. His friends, the landowners, were arrested, and their land was taken away. Some Bolsheviks were installed to manage their estates, and it was pretty risky to go fishing for carp, since the lakes and the carp were declared to be the property "of the people," and nobody had the right to fish there except the new Bolshevik managers, whose wives were selling the carp at the market in Kharkov. But to go hunting was frightfully dangerous because the guards had Red Army guns with real ammunition, and they protected very zealously the "people's property," and only they and their friends could hunt there. Nikandr Yakovlyevich could only dream about the past. He went to work, spent his free days looking after his animals and poultry, and taught his sons to live as good Christians.

Then two "vultures" arrived from the Kharkov CheKa.⁵ They took away Nikandr Yakovlyevich's hunting gun and some leather for boots, two suit lengths of wool cloth, a bit of cash, a few gold coins, and several other items that caught their eyes, and, of course, they also took Nikandr Yakovlyevich with them. His wife, Maria Makarovna, cried with their sons, and he cried too, and for good reason, since for him it was not a laughing matter.

After that, his wife and the boys made several journeys to Kharkov to take food and blanket to her husband, for they didn't know what food was given to prisoners, and it was more than likely that one wouldn't get much to eat there. Nikandr Yakovlyevich was imprisoned in a bare cellar. Of course, at that time the Bolsheviks were just beginning to get organized and

didn't have the time to build enough prisons for all the "enemies of the people" they were catching everywhere.

Time went on. They forgot even to interrogate him, and at last, after nine months, they just let him go home. Surprisingly, they gave him back his leather and one piece of cloth. The other things they probably kept as a payment for his stay there. Nikandr Yakovlyevich did not protest. After all, he knew that one never gets anything without paying for it! When he arrived home, his wife was overjoyed, and his sons were happy, too. Maria Makarovna gave her husband a good bath, washed all his clothes, got rid of a lot of known and unknown insects, and looked after him just like you do when one has had a very serious illness and needs to be put on his feet again.

After a month's recuperation, Nikandr Yakovlyevich went to Kharkov to find out what had happened to his work, since the small station was functioning on its own with the two assistant clerks and the janitor. But most of all, he wanted to find out why he was not receiving his salary.

But you can't do things like that in a hurry in the city. The buildings were large and several stories high. There were many long halls and numerous rooms, and the number of officials you'd never believe! And they kept sending him first to one place and then to another. He made the journey to Kharkov every day, except on Sunday, because at that time Sunday was still a day of rest. After three months of this pilgrimage, he found one kind-hearted person who gave him some good advice: "Look, Nikandr Yakovlyevich, what you need to do is to go down to the lower floor, then up the steps on the left, and then go to the room on the right."

So, he did go to the room on the right and found an official sitting there, who asked him, "What do you want?" Well, Nikandr Yakovlyevich told him the whole story from the beginning.

"What was your position?" asked the official.

"I was a stationmaster," he replied.

Then this comrade official looked at some notes and said, "I have no records of you here, although I've only been here four months. Your name is not on my list of stationmasters."

"Well, of course you wouldn't know about me, because I have been at the Kharkov's CheKa nine months, and then I spent a

month recovering after that," Nikandr Yakovlyevich replied innocently.

"And what were you doing there?" asked the surprised official.

"I beg your pardon, perhaps I have not made it clear. They kept me there for nine months in the cellar," explained Nikandr Yakovlyevich.

"What's that? In the CheKa, did you say? Was it for some counterrevolutionary activities?"

"Oh, no, nothing like that. I have documents to prove it."

"Give them to me."

Nikandr Yakovlyevich handed them over, and the comrade official read them: "Nikandr Yakovlyevich Myedvyedev is released from the CheKa without consequences."

Of course, the paper was all in order, signed and sealed and dated. "Tell me what it means 'without consequences?'" asked the official.

"I don't know what these CheKa expressions mean, but I suppose it means that no charge was made against me for anything," explained Nikandr Yakovlyevich.

"That may be so," replied the official very sternly, "but you spent nine months in some dirty cellar in the CheKa, and that's a stain on your character, and you cannot be allowed to continue to work as a stationmaster, so get out and don't come back here. Besides, since you are not working for the railways anymore, you have to immediately vacate the railway apartment."

Nikandr Yakovlyevich went home and told his wife all about his interview, and it made her very upset.

"Is this what they call 'without consequences?'" she asked. "They stole your gold coins, and several other things, and now you aren't allowed to go back to work and have to vacate the apartment. Aren't those 'consequences?'"

However, there was absolutely nothing they could do about it, so they found some rooms in a former clergyman's house in the village of Alekseyevka about twenty miles from the station of Belyayevka. The rooms were leading out of each other, and this was an inconvenience, for they would have to walk through the two rooms to get into the third one. But there were no other places around where they could have a barn to bring their cow and chickens with them. So, they moved there with all the family and

what were left of their animals, a cow and ten hens—the others had already been eaten. And they began to live like peasants. His wife Marusya took the milk and butter and eggs to the market at Kharkov. They made a little profit, and what they spent for other necessary products about equaled what they earned, so they managed to make ends meet, and they were not quite bankrupt yet.

About two months after they moved to their new residence, a whole commission turned up at their lodging and marched straight into their rooms, without asking permission and without giving any explanation. They talked freely amongst themselves without paying the slightest attention to the inhabitants. They admired one of the rooms, the first one, which had the entrance door from the outside. In fact, they appeared to take a lively interest in it. They took some measurements, discussed something, and then the senior one, the commissar, or someone of that sort, gave the order to Nikandr Yakovlyevich, "Citizen, you have to vacate this room immediately."

"What do you mean, 'vacate the room immediately?'" asked Nikandr Yakovlyevich with disbelief.

"I mean you are to remove your furniture because this room is required for government purposes."

"And what about us?" protested Nikandr Yakovlyevich.

"What happens to you is of no interest to us. You can live in the other two rooms, if you wish. But this room is confiscated."

"We have no way out if you take this room."

"That is not our concern!" The senior official ended the discussion sternly.

Nothing could be done; they had to get out, because that's how justice operated in those days. A telephone line was installed in the confiscated room. The new authorities had it all fixed up in a week, all-correct according to the technical rules. Only one technical thing they forgot about: they nailed up the door leading from the first room to the rooms where Nikandr Yakovlyevich with the family were to live. And they did it while the whole family sat in those rooms and watched what was going on.

Nikandr Yakovlyevich and his family, who now had no entrance door to their rooms, sat and wondered, "How are we to get out of these rooms? There's no other door, and we are forbidden to go through the one that's nailed up." They sat there

and wondered how in the world they would get out and feed their cow and hens and do all other necessary chores. The only escape seemed to be to fly out through the chimney, or to use the window to get out and, of course, to get back in, because, after all, they told them that it was all right to live in the two remaining rooms.

And at that point my Uncle Nikandr finished telling me his story, "Well, that's what happened, my dear nephew."

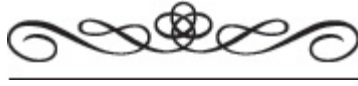
My Aunt Marusya was the first to climb through the window because she had to prepare the supper. The two sons passed to her through the window the bucket with the freshly drawn milk, a basket with eggs collected from their hens, and an armful of logs for the stove. When the supper was ready, aunt called us to the table. And we all had to climb through the window using the same method. Then Uncle Nikandr concluded the story, "That's how we live 'without consequences'; we had no choice in the matter but to use our window as a door."

Although Nikitovka was not far away, my aunt and uncle did not hear from my family for a long time. I told them about what happened to Uncle Pyetr and about the death of my grandfather.

They listened to my story of having been in the White Army and, knowing that I had just returned from Crimea, they suggested that I stay with them for a while, until things settled down at home. After all, thank God, at that time they had enough food to feed one more mouth.

I stayed with Aunt Marusya and Uncle Nikandr until early spring. There was no way to find out anything about my family, and I decided to try to contact them. I got on the freight train from Belyayevka to Losovaya, and from there I got on the freight train to Slavyansk, where I hoped to contact my father through a telegrapher who knew him. But the station there was full of CheKa's agents. I did not dare wait for the train going to Konstantinovka but decided to walk there following the railroad tracks. At the station of Konstantinovka everything was quiet, and I found my way to the telegraph office and asked the head telegrapher to contact my father in Nikitovka, and he obliged. After short greetings—we could not inquire much about family matters—I asked my father only what I wanted to know, "How are things over there?" and, "Do you think, it is okay for me to return home?" After receiving a positive answer, I replied, "I will

see you soon!"



Home at Last

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

In April of 1921, I returned to Nikitovka on a freight train that had stopped on the secondary tracks. I avoided going to the passenger platform and instead walked to my home following the railroad tracks. On my way I encountered my father and my younger brother Igor, who were on their daily walk.

"I am home," I said and embraced my father. He squeezed me in a tight hug keeping his cheek close to mine and sobbing from the emotion.

"Let me see you, Rostik," he said, releasing his embrace and holding my arms as if he were afraid I might run away. "Are you all in one piece?" he asked.

"Yes, yes. I am fine," I reassured him and asked, "Tell me, how are you? You look very pale and skinny."

"I am in convalescence after recuperating from the typhus spotted fever and hadn't had the time yet to put some color on my cheeks," replied my father.

There was a lot to talk about, but it was hard for both of us to start with the bad news. But, as I hugged my young brother, Igor, he innocently hurried in telling me, "Our Mama died..."

In tears I embraced my brother consoling him and asked my father, "Why did she die?"

My father elaborated the details of what happened during the two years that I was away from home. He told me that soon after I left to join the White Army, my Cousin Bonifaty had notified them that his mother, Maria Vikentyevna, contracted a typhoid enteric fever and that he and his wife Tatyana moved in to take care of her at home. But after much suffering she died. The death of her only sister was very painful and difficult for my mother, and when she and my father returned from the funeral in Taganrog, she mourned and wore only black.

Only a few months after her sister's death my mother also contracted a typhoid enteric fever, but after she recovered from

the illness, she had a partial paralysis of her hands and feet and could not open her hands and keep her fingers straight. Igor got into our conversation and recounted how he massaged Mother's hands several times a day and helped her to regain partial mobility. For months she remained very weak; lack of adequate food did not allow her to fully regain her strength. Late in the fall of 1920, she contracted a typhus spotted fever, the second serious illness in less than a year. It was a fight which her weary body could not win. My mother died on the second day of Christmas by the old calendar, one more victim of the epidemics ravaging the hungry population in 1920 during the famine and the civil war.

Entering the front door, I saw my older sister, Anya, washing the floor and I noticed that she was wearing a skirt made from a sack. I was told that all good clothes, except the warm winter clothing, had been slowly bartered for food. Also bartered were all of my mother's embroidered and crocheted items that she was so proud of—handcrafted through the years by her skillful hands.

After emotional hugging and kissing with my sisters, I shared my news with the family. I started with the bad news—the death of our grandfather Makar Tymofyeyevich Gladky and the escape of Uncle Pyetr to Kharkov. Then I told them about our Aunt Marusya and Uncle Nikandr's troubles. And only then I recounted what happened to me after I left home to join the White Army.

In turn, my father and my sisters informed me about what happened during these years at home and in Nikitovka. We stayed up late into the night talking, asking questions, and exchanging our opinions about the new Soviet government.

In the days that followed my return, I observed the changes that had occurred in the life of my family. Anya was rarely at home because she worked as a nurse at the railway hospital and in addition she had private patients from the Jewish families, whom she cared for at their homes. It was probably she who had brought home from her patients the germs that contaminated our mother with both typhoid infections.

When our mother was ill, Anya took care of her at home after returning from the hospital. And, because our family could no longer afford to have a servant, my younger sister, Vera, who was not yet fourteen, had to start helping with the home chores and

cooking. When mother died, Vera suddenly found herself in charge of the family.

Vera's lot was not easy for a girl of her age. While our father and older sister were at work, she had the responsibility of looking after her small brother, Igor, and she had to take care of the house and prepare something to eat when there were no provisions in the house to cook from.

She found it hard to do it all alone, and asking her younger brother, Igor, to help her was a real pain. He slept a lot or just stayed in bed and read. Vera would ask him, "Igor, go get the wood for the stove."

"Uhu..." he would answer but would not get up.

"Igor!" she would raise her voice louder.

"Uhu..." he would mumble, and he would not move.

Then Vera would scream at him in desperation, "Igor!!! I need the wood for the stove!"

The same was happening when she needed to get water from the courtyard. By the end of the day Vera would be tired, nervous, and hungry...

During these two years many changes had also occurred in Nikitovka. Bolsheviks had installed the new governing body, the so-called Soviet of Workers and Peasants Deputies, at the head of which was Commissar Orekhov, a former sailor from the Baltic Fleet, appointed by the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party.

Commissar Orekhov had a large red face with a long scar on one of his cheeks; he had very broad shoulders and a tall, erect figure. As a commissar's status symbol, he wore a double-breasted black leather jacket and a cap with the red star. As the first act of his authority, he arrested the acting railroad stationmaster, who was a former assistant of Marcely Tytovich Gasnyevsky. Then he started an intensive search for all whom he considered to be politically untrustworthy individuals. And there were many of them—all those who could have been anybody in any position above the simple worker in pre-revolutionary Russia; those who in the past helped, served, or in any way supported Whites; or those who had opposed Bolsheviks by words or deeds.

I needed to work to receive rationing coupons for food. Friends of my father and mother helped me to find employment. First, I worked in the railroad cooperative, where I was in charge

of the rationing coupons. But soon this position was given to someone with connections to the Bolshevik party. After a few weeks I was hired as an office clerk at the Railroad School, thanks to the recommendation of the communist Korniyenko, a member of the School Committee and a former rail switchman. He knew that I had returned from a defeated White Army, but in talking to my father, he expressed the opinion that in those confusing times, I, as many other young boys in Nikitovka, made a mistake in judgment, and that, now I had learned my lesson and would not give any trouble to the new Soviet government. But most of all, he recommended me because he knew my father very well and greatly respected him.



My Native Home

By Antonina G. Gladky

It was autumn, 1919. Not having had any news from my parents for a long time, my worry about their fate was increasing every day. I finally decided to make my way home to Slavyansk.

I went to the railroad station early in the morning. After several unsuccessful attempts at finding passage, only in the evening was I able to find a place on an open freight car going in the direction of Kharkov. Under normal conditions, traveling from Nikitovka to Slavyansk took about two to three hours. But now, the train moved slowly and stopped for long time at the stations so that it arrived at Slavyansk Station very early in the morning, when it was still dark.

My muscles and joints were frozen stiff from the cold wind gusts in the open freight car and from sitting the whole night in an uncomfortable position on the floor. At first, I couldn't even stand up straight. The station attendant told me that the local branch Vyetka was not going to town until late afternoon. I had no choice but to walk four kilometers to get there. The silence of the approaching dawn was frightening. But I was impatient to get home and, although I was scared to walk alone in the dark, I ventured on the road. As I was slowly regaining the use of my legs and feet, I increased my speed and walked hurriedly on the deserted road. When I had reached the outskirts of town, the first sounds that I heard were the distant clatter of hooves and the remote rattle of a cart on the pavement.

The sun had not yet risen when I found myself in my familiar neighborhood. Excitement has changed into anxiety as I approached my father's home. Here was the house, but why were the gates wide open? It looked to me as if somebody just gone out and forgot to close them. Palma, our old dog, a true friend of the family, rushed toward me with a plaintive whine, and began to run around my feet as if she were complaining about something. Suddenly, she dashed away barking loudly and ran toward the

back porch. I hurried to follow her but stopped on the stairs, astonished by the unexpected sight before me.

Dentist Ostrovsky, who lived across the street from us, and his mistress, dressmaker Maria Zaitseva, were pulling our big oval dining room table through the door. It got stuck in the door, even though the folding panels on both sides had been removed. The dentist, who was wearing only pajamas and slippers, saw me first. Looking embarrassed, he stopped pulling the table and began to pace back and forth on the porch. Palma continued to bark furiously. Ostrovsky's fat, large-bosomed mistress had disheveled hair and was wearing her morning robe. She rudely and shrilly shouted to the dentist, "You, devil! Why are you dashing around the porch? Pull it, I am telling you, pull it! Turn it around quickly!"

Then she turned her head and saw me standing on the steps. She diverted her attention to me and, reproachfully shaking her head, said, "Your father and mother along with the rest of your family have just run away from home..." Trying to justify herself, she added, "Somebody else will take it anyway. And, by the way, I can use it for cutting out fabric." Then she changed to a sweet voice: "It is better that we take this and save some of the other things for them," as if she really intended to return our things to us sometime in the future.

Hearing suddenly such unexpected news, I was overcome with emotion and couldn't speak. My thoughts overwhelmed me, "They left home, father, mother, my youngest sister Olga, and my little brother, Pyetya... They abandoned their home... Why? Where have they gone? Did they go somewhere else where it's better or not so dangerous?"

The distant clatter of hooves and the remote rattle of a cart in the silence of the early morning clearly resounded in my head. I understood all that had happened just before my arrival and thought, "My poor, poor mother! She could not understand what was happening. Frightened by all the threats, arrests, and reprisals of the mob against the *bourgeois*, it was probably she who forced my father to abandon our dear home."

Large tears were dropping from my eyes onto the floor, and onto Palma's head and paws. She licked them, licked my hands and feet and continued to yelp and to beckon me into the house. The dentist and his mistress finally pulled the table through the

door, leaving it wide open, and I absentmindedly entered the dining room. It was already half empty. The cupboard doors were open; a few chairs were lined against the wall. Apparently, the "thoughtful" dentist's mistress didn't have time to salvage them for "safekeeping." I noticed that the table was not there, and suddenly remembered how they pulled it out onto the steps, and how impudently they carried it past me and across the yard toward the gate.

Exhausted, I sat down and suddenly felt very hungry. I went into the kitchen and was surprised to feel the heat coming from the brick stove. I opened the oven. There, in a blue pot, were curd dumplings, still warm. Holding back my tears, I began to eat, but could barely swallow. I thought, "Apparently, they left quite recently. Maybe I've only missed them by about half an hour or a little bit more." I felt like running and catching up with them to stop and bring them back to our dear home.

Then I heard the guarded tread of footsteps in the hall. I came out of the kitchen and saw Maria Ivanovna Belichenko,¹ one of our good neighbors, at the threshold. In tears I rushed toward her. "Don't cry, Tonyechka,"² she said. "They left before dawn for Yusovka, to a safe place, to our friends' home. God willing, everything will settle down, and they soon will return. Come to our house, we will talk a little and you can stay overnight with us. Also, I'll show you the bundles your mother left with me for safekeeping."

It was very hard for me to stay alone in our empty house, so after I had selected a few items to take with me, I went to Maria Ivanovna's house. While she was busy with her children, I browsed through some books on the table and in the bookcase. Most of them were paperback classics, which had been received as supplements to the popular journal, "Niva."

On a lower shelf there were many newspapers and brochures. Looking through them I found a slim booklet with a very long and uncommon title, "Social-revolutionaries and the land issue."

"Is this also a supplement to 'Niva?'" I asked Maria Ivanovna, showing her the booklet.

"That's all that my husband brought from the village. He was always interested in agriculture and the land issue, and he subscribed to the journals "Bee Keeping" and "The Agricultural Journal."

"Is he perhaps a revolutionary?" I asked her timidly.

"Maybe he is—I don't know exactly. You see, he was always very reserved about disclosing his political views, even to me. After the revolution, he became noticeably more cheerful. And lately, I don't know why, he began traveling back and forth to the village of Bantushevo. Then, unexpectedly, he shaved himself, got a haircut, shortened his long moustache, put on his new suit, and departed for Bantushevo. He did not return for a long time.

"Then he came home when White Army came back to Slavyansk and to nearby villages and was on the alert the whole time. Then the Whites slowly retreated south, and the Reds showed up again. My husband left again for Bantushevo and only told me, 'Well, now we will start to organize a new life.' You know, he said that they now call the Reds by a strange name, 'Bolsheviks,'³ but that he doesn't agree with their ideas because they don't care about land reform as the Social-revolutionaries do."

Suddenly, she remembered why she had invited me and exclaimed, "Well, well, my dear, why don't I show you what your mother left for you and your sisters. Look, here it is all in this corner," and she pointed to several bundles stacked in a big basket.

"Your mother selected things from a big trunk and put them in the three separate bundles, and then she placed them in that big basket which she brought to me for safekeeping. She told me, 'This is a dowry for my three oldest daughters. Let them share it. If Tanya, Tonya, or Nyusya should return home while we are away, please give them their dowry and these small boxes of their personal memorabilia that I collected for them.'" Maria Ivanovna went to the chest of drawers and took out a small box and handed it to me, saying, "And this is what your mother told me to give you."

I opened the box carefully. There was a small silver icon representing my saint, Saint Anthony. I looked at it with tenderness. "Yes, yes, it's the same one that was tied to my crib, and later hung above my child's bed, and then on my bed until the last day I was at home. It's the same small silver icon that was placed on my neck when I was baptized," I recalled aloud as I looked into the small box. "But there is something else, here. It's the golden locket my father gave me when I graduated with a

silver medal from the gymnasium." I opened the locket. My mother's and father's pictures were still inside. And, at the bottom of the box, wrapped in tissue paper, were my graduation silver medal and a five-ruble gold coin left for me by my Dyedushka Danil when he died.

"Your mother was very sad," continued Maria Ivanovna. "Lately she'd been crying all the time and asking me, 'Tell me, please, what kind of sedition is happening in our Russian land? Who needs it? Who will rule Russia now? Could it be that it will be somebody like Styopa Bolotov?' Your mother was afraid of this Styopa Bolotov, because he often visited your father and always threatened him. He was telling him that, because he owned two brick houses and had a tailor shop where he 'exploited' a master, a master's assistant, and several apprentices, he would be arrested very soon. After they arrested the Bezhanovs—you know, those two shopkeepers who lived across the street—your father hid himself in our fruit garden where he sat all night up on the large branch of a big pear tree."

Maria Ivanovna sat next to me on a sofa and explained what had been happening in our small provincial, commercial town while I had been away, "The revolution brought much turmoil to our town. When the Reds came to stay awhile in town, they just started to purge it of the so-called 'enemies of the people.' People were confused; they couldn't tell who 'the enemy' was. Some said that it was anybody who owned property or shops; others specified that the 'the enemy' was 'rich' people, or those who have employed—or like they coined it now 'exploited'—other people. Therefore, nobody could figure out what might happen to him and his family. Dear Tonyechka, as most tradesmen families in town, your father and mother were under extreme stress, doubt, and uncertainty."

Then Maria Ivanovna took my hand between her palms and held it gently, wanting to reassure me and keep me calm while she was telling me about the state of my mother during the last days before their departure.

"Your mother was already obsessed with worry over the frequent visits and threats of Styopa Bolotov, who suddenly became a zealous revolutionary. Her perception was that she would inevitably lose her husband if they remained in town. This belief was supported by the fact—so many of our neighbors,

friends, acquaintances, as well as your father's customers had already been arrested by the Reds. After listening to all kinds of frightening stories about what had been happening to many well-known people in town, and after seeing what happened to our neighbors, your mother believed that Bolotov's threats were real, and she cried and begged your father to flee to another town where nobody knew them."

Maria Ivanovna caressed gently my hand and emitted a deep sigh before telling me the other reasons that were bothering my mother, "Recently, new rumors have been spreading quickly in town that wild hordes of a fanatical revolutionary Latvian Red division were advancing in the direction of Slavyansk. The rumors were that on their way, this division takes the law into its own hands, and its men are committing the atrocities of indiscriminately killing anyone who has property, shops, small businesses, or merely a decent-looking home."

She shook her head, as if trying to free herself from the terrible nightmare and added, "Your mother was so frightened by all the terrible events and rumors she had been hearing. When she heard the latest rumors about the atrocities of the fanatical Red Latvians, she renewed the pressure on her husband to leave home and flee from this town. She kept insisting on it until she finally convinced him to make a quick decision."

I interrupted her with my comment, "It's so unusual for my father to make a decision in a hurry about something as serious as an irreversible break with the past! It's so contrary to his meticulous habit of following the tailor's proverb, 'Measure ten times and cut only once.' But, as you said, events have become so confusing for anyone to understand. And probably, the fear for the safety of his family and for his own life became overwhelming!"

"A few days ago," continued Maria Ivanovna, "your mother came to see me; she was so excited and told me, 'Finally, my Gavryusha had decided to immediately flee from Slavyansk. But now I am concerned about where we should go. We don't know anybody in any big town with whom to stay for a few days until we can find a permanent place.' Well, I suggested that I have good friends in the town of Yusovka, a very nice warm-hearted family, Kuzma Tyeryentyevich and Alexandra Iosifovna Ylyukhin and their small daughter Anya. They have a comfortable

apartment and, if I ask them to help my friend's family, they certainly would agree to give them a refuge for a short time until they would find a place to live. And I reassured your parents that Kuzma Tyeryentyevich would also help them to get settled in the new town." And Maria Ivanovna reassured me, "So, I wrote a short letter to Alexandra Iosifovna asking her to help my good friends and long-time neighbors and gave it to your mother."

She paused for a while before telling me the rest of the story, "Your father immediately called on his brother Stepan in the village and asked him to transport the family as soon as possible to Yuzovka. His brother arrived yesterday evening with the big cart they used for bringing melons to market. They packed all they could carry, and all night they loaded their belongings. Your mother said that your father told her that his skills as a master tailor were more precious than gold, because nobody could take them away from him, and that with his work he could provide for his family anywhere and under any conditions. Therefore, he loaded his sewing machine and all the items from his shop, including the heavy tailors' table *katok*, so he would be able to start his trade immediately to support his family in the new place."

Then Maria Ivanovna's voice became relaxed and she described the last hours before the departure of my family. "While the men were loading, your mother and I made fresh dumplings with cottage cheese brought from the village by her brother-in-law, Stepan. Then, early in the morning your mother woke Pyetya and Olya up, and we all sat around the table, as is customary to do according to folk tradition for good luck before a departure. Your father said a prayer, and they all ate a good meal for the road.

"As he walked out of the house, your father made a big cross to bless his home, locked the door and gave the key to his brother. He told him to take the rest of their furniture and household goods on his way back and bring it to the village.

"I embraced them all and wished them good luck. Your mother was crying and kept repeating, 'God bless this house... God bless it... Only God knows if we ever will return here...' They were on their way out of town before dawn, so nobody would notice they had gone. Only I knew for sure where they were going."

Maria Ivanovna paused while nodding her head as if she was confirming her story. "That's how it happened," she concluded and reassured me again, "Don't you worry, Tonyechka, about them. The Ylyukhins will give them a very warm reception and will help them get settled."

We talked with Maria Ivanovna for a long time into the night. There were so many things that worried us both because of the uncertainty of their outcome. "Well, they created a revolution, and they're promising so many things," reasoned Maria Ivanovna, "but nobody knows how it will turn out. What is so surprising is that now so many feel and behave like they are the masters. And who are they? Look, for example, at Styopa Bolotov.⁴ He acts like every day is his Saint's day! He goes around expecting everybody to congratulate him. But what does he do? He intimidates and threatens everyone..."

Although I was exhausted physically from the long trip and from walking all the way home from the station, the emotions of the day and the news about my family that Maria Ivanovna recounted kept me awake. I was trying to make sense of all that had happened to my mother, my father, my young sister, and my little brother...

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1. See the chapter "Kharkovsky Street."
 2. Endearing form of the name "Tonya."
 3. Revolutionary faction led by Lenin.
 4. See the chapter "Prologue."



The New Masters

By Antonina G. Gladky

The next day after my arrival in Slavyansk, I got ready to go back to Nikitovka and my school. In the morning, I went back to our house to look for the last time at everything so reminiscent with sweet memories and so dear to my heart. I entered every room, stopped by every item, touched it, as if saying farewell to all that had been acquired and collected in forty years by my parents. My father's hard work and my mother's caring and thrifty housewife's hands made it possible for us to live in this cozy, pleasant house. Every piece revived in my memory the carefree childhood and the joyful years of my youth lived here, in my father's home. All things in our home were neither luxurious nor excessive; they were only what was necessary for any family to have a comfortable and happy life. I was carried away by my memories.

Suddenly, I had a vivid sensation—like I had just returned home from a trip or had come home from a walk—and expected someone to greet me. I even heard footsteps in the house. Yes, yes, I clearly heard footsteps and the creak of new boots resounding in the hall. I came near the door to see if it was just my imagination, but it wasn't.

Styopa Bolotov, wearing a soldier's coat and a cap with a red star, with a gun across his shoulders, was swiftly walking down the hall, looking into each room as he passed. A woman wearing a red kerchief was following him.

"Aha! They are gone, then; they did run away on time. And you, Miss Tonya," he addressed me sarcastically stressing the word 'Miss,' "what is the matter—why are you still here?" Then, without waiting for my answer, he quickly added, "It doesn't matter, anyway!" And opening his arms wide—almost touching the two walls of the hall—he solemnly declared, "In the name of the revolutionary decree I requisition everything: the house, the furniture, and all other contents of this house!"

He looked at the woman in the red kerchief and with an air of overestimated self-importance told her, "Come in, Ulyasha! It is all ours now. Come in, come in, don't be shy, be the mistress of the house!"

As they walked through the hall, he observed, "What a nice house tailor Berezhnoy has built for us." Then he added sharply, "All this with our money. Exploitation... Bourgeoisie..." These new words sounded strange in his otherwise shallow vocabulary as if he had learned them by rote without understanding their meaning. He pronounced them distinctly as if he was trying to show off his revolutionary proficiency.

He proceeded to the living room—the woman in the red kerchief followed him. There he continued his monologue, "Now, then, let's try out to sit here, in this armchair. It's most likely to be soft." He complacently sprawled in the chair upholstered in soft, green plush.

Suddenly, he jumped up from the chair and dashed toward our small piano polished like a mirror. "This, now, is also ours!" and roughly pushing the pedal with his boot he struck the keys with all five fingers. With a wild dissonance the sounds rolled throughout the house and stopped somewhere in a corner of the half-empty dining room.

"Ha-ha-ha-ha!" he burst into a fit of laughter. "Now we will sing our new songs! And all of this is only junk!" He grabbed the music sheets lying on the piano and threw them into the air. As the music sheets fell to the floor, he stepped on them with smelly boots freshly smeared with tar.

One of the music booklets fell onto a small table nearby and knocked down a porcelain figurine called "The Three Graces." The figurine fell to the floor and "The Three Graces" got split into three parts. I rushed to pick up the pieces. Styopa Bolotov laughed again and, tapping me on the shoulder, told me in a condescending manner, "Take it, take it, we don't need this junk."

After I collected the "Three Graces" and calmed down, I observed that Styopa Bolotov's appearance had changed considerably from the time I knew him as an apprentice in my father's tailor shop. He became thin and pale, with hollow cheeks, and his ash-gray eyes, which in the past were narrow and half-covered by eyelids, now looked wider. A tiny smile winked from his eyes and slightly parted his lips. His previously lazy

movements now were swifter and self-confident.

The woman in the red kerchief followed him everywhere. She seemed somewhat embarrassed and avoided looking at me. They went into the bedrooms and tried out featherbeds as well as every pillow on each bed. "U-u-ugh, how plump they are! I remember how the maids were plucking goose feathers so the misses could sleep on soft featherbeds. Now we will sleep on them! They are likely much softer than the hard table in the tailor shop where I slept when working for tailor Berezhnoy." Then he announced suddenly in a very solemn voice, "Well, Ulyasha, I have to go; very important matters and revolutionary comrades await me."

Ulyasha, or Ulya, was the daughter of blacksmith Dmitry Kusnetsov, who lived on our street, not far from us, and she was my childhood girlfriend. Her father had his own farriery. As children, we often dropped in and stared in wonderment at the way her father forged horseshoes and nailed them to the horses' hooves. I remember that I could not watch without pity when he hammered burning hot nails into the poor horses' feet, and Ulya used to laugh at me. She pulled me against my will to the bench, where the horse was tied to, and screamed at me, "You, little fool! Look, I am not afraid of anything!"

Her mother contracted tuberculosis and died very young. Ulya, as the oldest daughter, had to manage the household and so was unable to graduate from the girls' gymnasium. Styopa Bolotov quite frequently visited her, and occasionally I saw Ulya sitting with him on the bench in front of her house.

When Styopa left us alone, I asked her, "Did you marry him, Ulya?"

"Now it is not necessary—there is freedom now," she replied resolutely.

"And what does your father say about it?" I insisted.

"Nothing. I tell you—there is freedom now—and we can just live together this way," she answered, again avoiding looking me in the eyes. And she reasoned further, "And why should it matter to me? Styopa is now in the Red Army, and he has registered himself as a member of the Bolshevik Party. Who knows, he might even find himself some day in some Soviet. You see, times are like this now—the doors are opening—if only one doesn't miss the opportunity. And, so what, if he's illiterate—that doesn't matter. He'll learn fast." She told me all this as if anticipating my

questions and explained further, "Yesterday, in the Workers Club was a meeting for women; they explained to us that even a woman-cook could govern the country. They say that Lenin himself said so."

Then, she suddenly turned toward me and spoke further with arrogance, clearly trying to insult me, "And you are nothing now! Educated, graduated from gymnasium, courses for teachers, speaking foreign languages. *In-tel-li-gen-tsi-a!*"² She pronounced this word distinctly, syllable by syllable, with contempt. Then, spitting in my direction, she suddenly turned away from me and, with the confident stride of the mistress of the house, walked into the room next door and started to put it in order.

Astonished by her outburst and painfully humiliated, I went slowly to the back porch and glanced over the courtyard. Then I went down on the stairs and found myself in the fruit garden. A light breeze brushed my face. The trees stood bare, without leaves. It looked as if nothing had changed in the garden. There were no signs of ravaging. Mighty branching apple trees, shapely pear trees, and thorny apricot and prune trees stood quietly awaiting winter. A brown carpet of leaves, shining with dew, covered the ground. Passing by the summer kitchen surrounded by lilacs, I noticed a young tree with a small sign attached to it. The inscription read: "*Belyi Naliv*,"³ 1918. *Olya*."

Olya, my younger sister, was thirteen years old when she planted this new variety of apple tree. Our neighbor, Belichenko, brought the little tree from his nursery, where he had cultivated it from a wild apple tree. He promised Olya that in a few years she would have a light amber-colored and fragrant fruit that would ripen early in the summer. Olya loved to work in the fruit garden and often wondered, "How mankind could use all the riches of nature to create such delights for themselves as the fruit gardens." She told us with enthusiasm, "I will certainly be a gardener! I want to cultivate new varieties of fruit trees."

When I departed to assume my first position at the gymnasium in Nikitovka, Olya saw me off, saying, "Being a teacher is very difficult work. It is not like cultivating trees. We will see what kind of students you will bring up." And my mother, kissing me goodbye, said with pride, "Our Tonya is a clever girl; she definitely will become a school Headmistress."

And suddenly, I remembered the remote rattle of the carriage

when I walked at the outskirts of the town and thought, "Where are they now? Will they come back home someday?" I knelt and kissed the ground and took a few autumn leaves as a keepsake of my native place.

Calmed by the silence and the fresh air in the garden, I felt a gleam of hope as I walked toward the gate. The unrelenting past was slipping away from me, though the present and the future still seemed uncertain.

The next morning, I went to visit the aunt and uncle of my sister-in-law, Katya, wife of my brother Kolya. They hadn't had any news from my brother in a long time. Because they lived closer to the local railroad branch stop, Shnurkovskaya, I could take an early morning train from there to Slavyansk Station; they allowed me to sleep my last night in town at their house.

The day before, I had selected some items from my home for myself and put them in the small bundle that my mother had left for me and placed it in a wicker basket. The other two bundles that were my sisters' dowries, I left for safekeeping with Maria Ivanovna Belichenko.

With the permission of Katya's aunt, Varya Grechko, and her husband, Misha, I brought my basket containing my bundle and the other items to their home. That afternoon I went to visit some of my girlfriends and also said goodbye to Maria Ivanovna Belichenko. In the evening I returned to Aunt Varya's to stay the night. Before going to sleep I needed to add some other items to my bundle, including a few of my French books that I had left at home. I discovered that my bundle was not as neatly tied as I left it. Indeed, upon looking inside it I noticed that several embroidered batiste undershirts were missing.

When I complained, Aunt Varya shushed me. "It is probably my husband's daughter who went through your things." But she warned me, "Please, don't complain so loud that my husband could hear it, because the girl is light-fingered, and it is not the first time that she had been caught stealing. If her father found out that this had happened again, he will kill her this time."

Aunt Varya promised me, "If I would find any of your undershirts in the house, I would return them to you." But I never got anything back from her. This episode left such an impression on me that I could never forget it, because my trust in the honesty of persons whom I thought I knew well was violated.

I took an early morning local train that was, surprisingly, on time. But, when I arrived at the Slavyansk Station, I had to wait until late evening for a train going south. Finally, there was one going in that direction.

I got into the freight car crammed with people sitting on their luggage or lying on the floor. It took me a while to get used to the darkness and find a spot to sit on my bundle. At night, the train proceeded at a slow pace, stopping for hours along its way in the middle of fields, where the Red Army controlled a portion of the railway tracks.

There, the commissars⁴ jumped into every car and, throwing light from hand lanterns into the frightened faces of passengers, behaved as if they were looking for someone. They checked the documents, insistently demanding to know who each person was, where each one was going, and why. Then they forced the “suspected” individuals to get off the train. Under the guise of searching for political enemies, they made a thorough search of every suitcase and basket, and fingered through all bags and sacks, opening them and taking flour, salt, grain, potatoes, and all such products the people had succeeded in bartering for somewhere.

During the searches I pretended to sleep while sitting on my neat basket, which had not raised the suspicion of the Red commissars. As we approached Nikitovka, everything quieted down, and there were no more searches. When we entered the area occupied by Whites, only once were we visited by a patrol, which checked to see if there were no Red uniforms among the passengers.

The train stopped at the station of Nikitovka late in the morning. As I stepped onto the platform, I saw one of my students, Vadim Kuzenko, standing next to his father, Assistant Railroad Stationmaster. Vadim recognized me and very gallantly offered to help with my basket. He carried it all the way to my apartment. As we were walking, we shared the most recent rumors about the Reds and what would happen should they finally take full control of our small hamlet and a very important railroad station and rail junction, which they had already tried to take several times. For the same reason, the Whites kept it. Although Vadim was only sixteen years old, he was very concerned over the policy of the Reds that drafted young men

into the Red Army. I was surprised that my pupil, whom only a few months ago I considered just a boy, suddenly was behaving as a grown-up young man. And I thought, "How dangerous events make these children mature so quickly!"

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1. Council (usually used with the specific name of a governing body, such as Town Soviet Council or Village Soviet Council.)
 2. Intellectuals.
 3. "White Juice."
 4. Political agents of the Reds and Bolsheviks during the Civil War in Russia.



A Tragic Refuge

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

When my father Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and his family arrived in the town of Yusovka in the autumn of 1919, they found refuge in the apartment of Kuzma Tyeryentyevich Ylyukhyn and his wife, Alexandra Iosyfovna. They were good friends of their Slavyansk neighbor and a friend, Maria Ivanovna Belichenko. The Ylyukhyns had a large apartment, and they agreed to share one of the rooms with Gavriyl Danilovich and his family until they could find themselves a permanent place to live.

The Ylyukhyns were indeed a very friendly and generous couple and shared selflessly their place with the refugee's family. And the children also got along very well. Their daughter Anya, who was a few years older than Pyetya, quickly became Olya's friend.

At that time, a typhoid epidemic was taking its toll on the population. It was almost impossible to protect oneself from the infection that was passed on through food and contact with contagious persons. My mother, Natalia Iosyfovna, had to go to the market every day to find her family something to eat, since here they didn't have any provisions stored in their pantry as they had at home. Soon after their arrival in Yuzovka early in 1920, my mother caught, probably from someone at the market, the typhoid enteric fever. She had to be placed in a mill hospital, where she was so sick and had such a high fever that, after much suffering, she died without regaining consciousness.

Gavriyl Danilovich managed to find a clergyman to perform the modest funeral ceremony and buried his wife, as she would have wanted, with Christian Orthodox rites. He was sorry that he had to lay her to rest in Yuzovka's old town cemetery, far from her home and far from her relatives and friends, with only the Ylyukhins attending the funeral. They were the only people who knew her there, because neither she nor Gavriyl Danilovich had had time to make any friends yet. It was not like it would have

been if she had died in Slavyansk, where their relatives and friends, neighbors, acquaintances and her husband's customers would have paid their last respects. It was also impossible to notify their children quickly. They could not get there fast enough to attend the funeral, because neither the mail service nor the railroads were functioning regularly at that time.

While his wife was in the mill hospital, Gavriyl Danilovich met the hospital doctor, Fyedor Vasylyevich Bervy, who took care of her. The doctor befriended Gavriyl Danilovich and, when he found out that his friend was looking for a place to live, he offered to rent him a part of his big apartment. Doctor Bervy was very nice to Gavriyl Danilovich and helped him to get settled in his new place. After her mother's death, the young Olga took over the housekeeping chores: cooking, going to the market to find food, and looking after her little brother, Pyetya.

When I finally heard of my mother's death, it was too late to attend the funeral, but I went to visit my father in Yuzovka. When I got there, I found my sister Olga very sick with the typhoid enteric fever like her mother. In those days there was no medicine that could cure this disease; there was nothing to be done but try to keep the fever down and wait to see if the patient's own body defenses would overcome the infection. Doctor Bervy hoped that Olga's young body would be able to fight the disease better than her mother had.

I stayed at the hospital for several days and nights to be near my sister, hoping that she would get better. But Olga became yet another victim of the raging epidemic in the country. My beloved youngest sister died while I was with her at the mill hospital. I was devastated by this loss. My father and I buried Olga next to her mother in the town's old cemetery.

For my father, Gavriyl Danilovich, the refuge in Yuzovka had turned into a place of double tragedy; in a space of a few months, he had lost his wife and youngest daughter. Fyedor Vasylyevich Bervy was very supportive and a good friend to him during that time. Then, in the summer, both Tanya and Nyusya came to stay with their father from Kharkov. Tanya had just graduated from courses in dentistry, and Doctor Bervy found a position for her at the mill hospital as a dentistry intern. Nyusya stayed there during summer vacation and returned to Kharkov in the fall to continue her studies in the Kharkovsky Medical Institute.

During that summer, Tanya met Lev Myronovich Tatarsky, whose nickname was Lyeve, who was courting her intensively. The beautiful Tanya fell very much in love with the slender and attractive young man. They appeared to be the perfect couple, just made for each other. Soon they began to talk about marriage, but deeply religious Gavriyl Danilovich was not very happy with his daughter's choice. Lyeve was a Jew, and that meant that they could not be married according to Christian Orthodox tradition. But Gavriyl Danilovich's attitude could not mar their relationship and Tanya and Lyeve's love continued to blossom.

Being new in town, Gavriyl Danilovich was still able to find some clients for tailoring, but being unknown in town, he was barely able to provide for himself and his little son Pyetya. In those hard times, people looked first for food; clothing was secondary. The illnesses and funerals had added to his burden, and everything in Yuzovka reminded him of the tragic loss of his loved ones. News from Slavyansk was reassuring; the wave of reprisals against the craftsmen had diminished. Gavriyl Danilovich knew that in his hometown, where he was known, he could count on his reputation as a master tailor. There he would have enough customers to provide a living for himself and his little son Pyetya, and he could help his daughter Nyusya until she graduated from the Medical Institute. So, he decided to return to his hometown. He hired a big wagon, loaded all his belongings and tailoring equipment into it, and headed for Slavyansk.

Tanya remained in Yuzovka to finish her internship in dentistry. Nyusya continued her studies in Kharkov, and I was teaching in Nikitovka. Gavriyl Danilovich hadn't heard any news yet from his oldest son Nikolay and his family who were living in Taganrog. But he worried most about his middle son Ivan, who had enlisted as a volunteer in the White Army of General Vrangell. Since then, no one knew what had become of him.

When in the summer of 1921 Gavriyl Danilovich returned to his hometown, he found out that his two homes had been taken over by the town's new Town Soviet government. The same thing had happened to other properties that had been abandoned by their owners, or to those that were considered too large for private ownership and were confiscated by the new government.

However, the most surprising for Gavriyl Danilovich was the story his brother Stepan told him about what had happened when

he stopped in Slavyansk on his way back from Yuzovka after bringing the family of his brother there.

"As instructed by you," his brother told him, "I went to your home to take for safekeeping to the village of Nikolskoye all that remained in your house. When I got to Slavyansk, I found that somebody was living in your house. I went to the back porch and knocked on the door. Your former apprentice, Styopa Bolotov, opened it. He recognized me and rudely inquired, 'What do you want? Your brother ran away from his house. Now I live here.'

"My brother didn't run away.' I answered him. 'They had moved to another town. I came to take what is left in the house and bring it to the village for safekeeping.' Styopa Bolotov looked at me with an air of insolence and boldly declared, 'I live here now! All property of tailor Berezhnoy has been confiscated—in the name of the people. Nothing can be taken from here. Now it all belongs to us,' and he pronounced proudly, 'pro-le-ta-ri-ans!'

"I didn't dare to question this declaration of right to my brother's property. I stood a few moments on the steps of the house and thought: 'After all, my brother indeed abandoned his house and escaped from his hometown. Perhaps, in the few days that I was on the road, the authorities indeed confiscated my brother's property and allowed Styopa Bolotov to live there. How can I know the truth? I can't complain to the authorities and tell them that my brother was afraid. They would start asking questions about where he is now—then I will do more harm to my brother than leaving everything as it is...'

"I looked at Styopa Bolotov and politely told him, 'Well, take good care of the property so that all will be in order when my brother comes to retrieve it.' Styopa Bolotov laughed, 'Ha-ha-ha... Let him come back! He will be arrested on the spot!' His ringing laughter accompanied me, as I slowly walked toward the gate, 'Ha-ha-ha, ha-ha-ha...'"

When Gavriyl Danilovich heard this story from his brother, he decided to let the things remain as they were—complaining to the Soviet authorities was out of the question—it would only bring reprisals against him. "Thank God," he thought, "no one can take away my skills or my hands. That's all that I need to start working again..."

Gavriyl Danilovich found room and board with Anna Petrovna, whose maiden name was Boyko. She was from a family

that resided a long time in Slavyansk, and her brother and sister also lived not far from her. She was the widow of the local butcher Ploskogolovy, whom Gavriyl Danilovich had known quite well. Her house had only four rooms and a large kitchen. It had not been taken away by the Soviet authorities. She lived there with her two sons. The oldest, Dmytry, nicknamed Mytya, was in his early teens, and the youngest, Zhorzh, was about the same age as Pyetya. Anna Petrovna had a hard time without a breadwinner providing for the family, so she took Gavriyl Danilovich in as a boarder. She allowed him to sew in the big kitchen that had an entrance that his customers could use. She also gave him use of the smaller, furnished room where he and his small son Pyetya slept.

Gavriyl Danilovich had brought a few pieces of furniture and some household items and all his tailoring equipment and tools back from Yuzovka. He put his big tailor's table, called a *katok*, and his old Singer sewing machine against the wall near two windows in the kitchen, and he was ready to start his tailoring business once more.

The news that Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy had returned spread quickly in Slavyansk, and in no-time he had plenty of work. Having a reputation as one of the best master tailors in town, Gavriyl Danilovich didn't need to invite customers; one by one they were at his door placing their orders. But now, most of them came from the new ruling hierarchy because all of his prosperous old customers had either disappeared from the town or had been imprisoned as "enemies of the revolution." Most of those who remained had become impoverished, when all their possessions and property were taken away from them—all "in the name of the people." These goods ended up in the hands of the new masters, the Bolsheviks and the Soviet officials, who had come to power. Reflecting upon what had happened to so many of his friends, customers, neighbors, and acquaintances (who had been either shopkeepers or government employees, or just prosperous town citizens who had been able to accumulate some wealth by living within their means), Gavriyl Danilovich knew that his most precious possessions were his trade and his skillful hands, which nobody could take away from him.

Soon Gavriyl Danilovich became so busy with his tailoring business that he made an agreement with his landlady that she

also would look after little Pyetya. And Anna Petrovna was quick to recognize Gavriyl Danilovich's potential as a good breadwinner. She saw that he had a full load of work sufficient to feed them all. Their mutual needs played a major part in their eventual decision to get married, which they consecrated in the only church that remained open, the one at the cemetery, because the Sobor, the town's cathedral, had been closed and converted to a Workers' club.

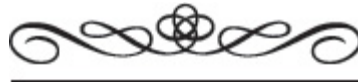
Then Gavriyl Danilovich began to take care of and feed his new family. He used to say, "The needle fed my large family before; the needle will now feed us, too!" He had to work harder to feed the family of five than he did of only Pyetya and himself, but he was never afraid of work. And once again, with curved back, he sewed all day long, either sitting cross-legged on the *katok*, tailoring by hand, or sitting at the sewing machine. Only when he drafted patterns with chalk directly onto cloth spread out on the *katok*, or when he ironed with his heavy charcoal-fueled iron, could he straighten his back and have some relief from his curved position.

One Sunday, early in the morning, Gavriyl Danilovich went to church at the cemetery, which had not yet been closed by Soviet authorities. On the steps of the church sat a beggar, an old half-paralyzed man who extended a trembling hand. His legs trembled, too. Gavriyl Danilovich stopped to give him alms and recognized in him his good customer, a former shopkeeper Rostovtsev, who had signed the Promisory Note and guaranteed the bank the money Gavriyl Danilovich needed to build his second house. Although the Town Soviet had confiscated his houses before he could finish paying for them, Gavriyl Danilovich felt that he owed Rostovtsev for the trust he had shown him. From that day on he helped the old man with whatever he could afford; the last donation he made paid for the man's funeral.

Gavriyl Danilovich found out from some of his customers that his former neighbor Belichenko had moved his family to the village of Bantushevo, where he became the Chairman of the Village Soviet right after the Reds took over. But Belichenko was arrested after it became known that he belonged to a revolutionary faction called the Social Revolutionaries, who were considered enemies of the Bolsheviks, and he was deported to a concentration camp in Siberia. Soon after his arrest, his wife,

Maria Ivanovna, died, leaving their two children orphans.

Hearing this news, Gavriyl Danilovich reflected, "To succeed these days, it's not enough to be a revolutionary—one had to be the right kind of revolutionary—Belichenko was the wrong kind, he had his ideas and stood by them. And he was sent to Siberia for it. But Styopa Bolotov—he doesn't have any ideas—he just repeats the slogans like a parrot and is rewarded for it by the Bolsheviks..."



The Family of Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy

*As Remembered by Nikolay N. Berezhnoy, Vladimir N.
Berezhnoy, and Antonina G. Gladky*

Before events of the revolution engulfed the northern part of Russia, Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy¹ moved with his family to the town of Taganrog, where he worked for a few years with a reputable architectural contractors company. The two partners who owned the company were very happy with his work, and Nikolay received a good salary. He was able to afford to live in a nice house, furnish it well, and provide a comfortable living for his family.

But the revolution that began far up north and the civil war that was spreading throughout Russia brought slowly but steadily the dramatic changes in the life of all the people.² These changes also occurred in the provincial town of Taganrog, located on the shore of the Azov Sea in the southern region of the country.

The Whites retreated steadily from the north and concentrated in the south, where they were trying to regroup. At the same time the White Army was undergoing a dramatic change in its composition. There was an increase in lower and higher ranking officers and a steady decline in ordinary soldiers. They hoped to offer a more solid resistance while defending the remaining under-their-control territory and thus protect themselves and the population from the unrelenting pressure of the Reds. But their efforts were unsuccessful, and they suffered one defeat after another.

Nikolay's younger brother Shura, who enrolled as a volunteer in the White Army, was at that time guarding with his detachment the station of Nikitovka, which was an important railroad junction for the Whites because it had major connections to vital destinations in the South. The Reds often made

unexpected strikes on the outskirts of the station, attempting to disrupt the movement of White troops, weapons, and ammunition. In one of the strikes, Shura was seriously wounded and was transported to the military hospital in Taganrog, where he contracted typhus and died shortly after his arrival.

Nikolay only found about Shura when he received a telegram from home notifying him that his mother was coming to Taganrog for Shura's funeral. Being a devout Christian, she wanted her beloved son to be buried according to all the Christian Orthodox traditions. She was relieved that her oldest son, Nikolay, was there to make all the necessary arrangements. She was comforted by him and by her daughter-in-law, Katya, who were at her side at such a tragic moment in her life.

After Shura's funeral, the situation in Taganrog quickly began to deteriorate. The civil war had already swept across most of the Ukraine and was spreading farther south, to other parts of Russia. The South was inundated with civilian refugees who were fleeing from the advancing Reds. The refugees told horror stories of the atrocities committed by Red bands that were taking the law into their own hands. Some Red bands were notorious for indiscriminate killings not only of the White officers, but also civilians who were considered to be rich and wealthy, and anyone who was a "somebody" before the revolution: shopkeepers, policemen, clergymen, homeowners, civil servants...

In the early fall of 1919, construction work in Taganrog had stopped completely. Rumors of the atrocities of Reds quickly contributed to the panic of the civilian population and the military alike. Great numbers of frightened people filled the roads as they fled toward the Black Sea coast, hoping to reach Crimea before the Reds could cut off the narrow passage from the Ukraine. The architectural contractors with whom Nikolay worked in Taganrog made a quick decision to abandon the business and flee with their families. They suggested Nikolay do the same.

There was no need to convince Katya that they should also flee. She was terrified by rumors she had heard from their neighbors. Her fear was reinforced by watching all the people leaving the town on foot, taking with them only what they could carry in hand carts, or on sleds, or in backpacks, baskets, and bags because no transportation of any kind was available for the civilians.

One night, early in the winter of 1920, Nikolay and Katya gathered all the possessions they could carry and before dawn made their escape on foot, headed west for Maryupol. Nikolay carried a heavy backpack and two bags, and Katya, who was in her last months of pregnancy with their second child, had a basket in one hand and with the other one was holding the hand of their three-year-old son Kotyk,³ whom she had to pull along to keep pace with her husband.

When they reached the town of Maryupol, they rested for a day and then continued on to the Militopol. There were many people on the road, and they walked much faster than Nikolay and Katya. As they were leaving them behind, some people urged them to walk faster if they didn't want to be overtaken by the Reds.

The last stretch of their journey to Militopol was the hardest. There was a lot of snow, and Katya had to pull Kotyk by the hand very hard to make him walk faster. As difficult as it was for them to walk, it was even harder to find a place to stay overnight. In one place a vagrant man robbed them, and took Nikolay's quilted overcoat that he was wearing. Finally, completely exhausted, they reached Militopol. They had to stay there awhile because Katya was due to give birth at any moment. There, on March 4, 1920, shortly after they arrived in Militopol, their second son was born. They named him Vladimir, but they called him Volodya. Nikolay and Katya decided to remain in that town and await their destiny.

Later, when the Reds took the town of Militopol, the family survived the rampage. Many White officers and soldiers managed to destroy their military papers, remove their military uniforms, and dress in civilian clothing before the Reds arrived. The Reds were well aware of this, and so they searched for single men who weren't local residents and didn't have civilian identification papers. These men were arrested on the spot because they were considered beyond doubt to be Whites and were first priority for the executions. Fleeing civilians, especially those with families, were left for later investigations. The Reds were hurrying to push the remaining Whites into the Black Sea area and to surround them before they could organize themselves or take refuge in Crimea.

After the first wave of persecution, Nikolay and Katya were left alone by the new authorities. Katya, who was very religious,

placed two candles in front of the icon that she had carried with her during their strenuous journey. She told her husband, "Kolya, come here and pray with me. God was merciful to us. He saved us, so that we will be able to nurture and bring up our sons."

Kolya joined his wife in prayer. But after they finished thanking the Lord, he couldn't stop himself from saying aloud what was on his mind, "The Red devils have too much else to do at this time. Maybe our turn just hasn't come yet..."

Katya looked at him with reproach and said, "Have faith, Kolya, have faith in a merciful God!"

After the birth of their second son, Volodya, Nikolay and Katya waited until fighting between the Reds and Whites came to an end in the southeastern Ukraine, allowing the railroad transportation to partially resume. Nikolay decided that this was the time for them to leave the town of Militopol. Returning to Taganrog was out of the question. There he would have been considered as a "well-to-do" former construction architect from a known architectural company, who had fled from the Reds with his family, leaving all his possessions behind. The only place for them to return was Slavyansk, where they thought that they could find a temporary place to stay in one of Nikolay's father's houses. There it was also known that he once had a small architectural studio and had done work for local building constructors.

They managed to get in a freight car on the train going north and traveled for several days. Upon their arrival in Slavyansk, Nikolay couldn't find his father and mother in their home. The neighbors told him that now it was occupied by his father's former apprentice, Styopa Bolotov. They walked to Katya's father's Inn, and they found the entrance was guarded by men in Red uniforms. They didn't dare stop and look inside the courtyard. From there, they proceeded to Katya's Aunt Varya and Uncle Misha's house. There everyone was home.



Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy, Kharkov, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1928–1930.

The encounter was an emotional one. Everyone was overjoyed to see each other alive and well. After the excitement of their reunion abated somewhat, they began exchanging the news about what had happened to them and to other relatives during this short but despairing time in their lives.



Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnuy Family. From left: Nikolay (Kolya) Gavriylovich Berezhnuy; son Vladimir (Volodya) Nikolayevich Berezhnuy; wife Ekaterina (Katya) Iosifovna Grechko Berezhnaya; and son Nikolay (Kotyk) Nikolayevich Berezhnuy. Kharkov, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1932–1934.

From Aunt Varya and Uncle Misha they found out that Katya's father barely had time to flee after the Reds had seized his inns. Then Aunt Varya carefully told Nikolay about the tragedies his father had suffered in the short period soon after the Reds had occupied the town and after he with his family had fled from Slavyansk to Yuzovka. The hardest for Aunt Varya was to tell him the sad news that his mother and younger sister Olga had died of typhoid fever while they were in Yuzovka. She told him that after burying his wife and daughter, his father had returned to Slavyansk with his small son Pyetya.

After Aunt Varya told him the sorrowful part of the story, she said that the rest, although it was also not very good news, was much easier to tell. As Nikolay had already found out from his neighbors, Aunt Varya confirmed that his father's homes had been confiscated. "Well," concluded Aunt Varya, "your father got married, and now he and Pyetya live in his new wife's house."

Nikolay immediately went to visit his father, who could not believe that his oldest son, from whom he hadn't received any news for a long time, now stood before his eyes. The happiness of their reunion was dimmed by sorrow when his father told him

the heartbreaking details of his mother's and sister's illnesses, from which they had no chance to recover. Nikolay knew that his father was a devout believer in God. But he was surprised that the religious beliefs had given his father the strength to accept the tragedy of losing his wife and beloved daughter with such complete resignation to God's will with the biblical patience of Job.

Nikolay told his father what had happened to him and his family: that they had also lost everything and had returned to Slavyansk hoping to find a roof over their heads in one of his father's houses. Gavriyl Danilovich, with regret, told his son that he had lost his houses to the Soviet government and was now living in the house of his second wife, Anna Petrovna Boyko, the widow of the butcher Ploskogolovy.

He apologetically explained that he couldn't ask his new wife to allow Nikolay's entire family to stay there, because she had two sons who lived with her. Dmitry was a teenager, and Zhorzh was about the same age as his son Pyetya. But, if Katya, with the children, could stay in her aunt's house, Nikolay probably could, for a few days, sleep with his brother Pyetya in his bed. Nikolay reassured his father that he shouldn't worry about it, since his wife's Aunt Varya and Uncle Misha had already told them that they could stay at their house until they found their own place.

Thus, Nikolay, Katya, and their sons lived for a while with her Aunt Varya, Uncle Misha, their unmarried daughter Polya, and her son, also called Misha. Although the house was not large enough to allow them much privacy, they each had a place to sleep and use of the kitchen for cooking their meals. They also had nice fruit and vegetable gardens. In the courtyard, Uncle Misha had made for his grandson Misha a swing, a horizontal bar, and some other play equipment. For Kotyk and Misha, who were about the same age, it was the perfect place, with plenty of space in which to play, climbing up the cherry tree and picking cherries and spending hours climbing, jumping, and swinging. While living there, Kotyk and Misha became good companions and friends, and Kotyk and Volodya became attached to their maternal Aunt Varya and Uncle Misha, whom they called Dyedushka and Babushka.

Nikolay was known in town for the work he had done after graduating from technical school. Therefore, shortly after his

arrival in Slavyansk in 1920, he quickly found employment with the Town Soviet in the Department of Gorkomkhos⁴ Office. The department was in charge of maintenance and repairs of government buildings, including all the former government's office buildings and all the factories, businesses, and private homes that had been confiscated by the Soviets. Most non-residential buildings were adapted for government business and commerce, and private homes were turned into rental apartments, the rent being collected by the Town Soviet rental office. Therefore, Nikolay decided to settle with his family in Slavyansk for the time being.

By that time, his younger brother Vanya had come home after serving in the White Army, unfortunately with his military card stamped *byelogvardyeyets*,⁵ which made it hard for him to find work. As soon as his military status was checked, he was immediately laid off. Since Nikolay worked in the office of the Town Communal Property, he was able to put his younger brother to work as a bookkeeper there.

Working in that office, Nikolay found a nice single-family house to rent, and his family moved from Aunt Varya and Uncle Misha's home to their new place. The house was not far from October Revolution Street, where his father now lived. It was so close to walk there that Nikolay and Katya very often took their sons to visit their grandfather. Gavriyl Danilovich used to put his small grandson Volodya up on his tailoring table and give him a box of buttons to play with, the same as he used to do with his grandson Kotyk when he was small. But now Kotyk preferred to climb by himself up onto the table, where his grandfather sat cross-legged and hand-tailored the interfacings. Kotyk liked to imitate him by sitting cross-legged next to him and watching what he did. Kotyk thought that his grandfather was a very handsome man but that he smoked too much. He wondered about the hot cigarette ash that fell on his grandfather's long beard and formed many small burned spots.

During the day, Kotyk preferred to go to play with his new friend Misha in his courtyard and garden at Number 31 Profintern Street. Although it took more than half an hour to walk across town from where they lived, Kotyk rarely missed a day without going there. He especially loved to play ball and compete with Misha in endurance, speed, and perfection of performance

on the sports equipment that Uncle Misha had built. No wonder that his younger brother Volodya, who at that time was only a two-year-old toddler, later could not recall that Kotyk ever played with him.

One episode from early childhood remained vividly in Volodya's mind. Perhaps it was because he had heard his mother tell the story many times. It happened one spring day after a brief, light rain. The young girl who helped his mother take care of him had spread a blanket on the grass and put him on it to play. That evening he had a very high fever, and the doctor diagnosed it as pneumonia. They placed him on a pile of pillows, elevating his head high above his chest and cooled his forehead. The doctor advised his mother that, if he passed the crisis that would occur in about two hours, he would be fine—if not, there was very little hope for his survival. "Well," his mother used to finish the story, "Thank God, he survived!"

While still working in Slavyansk for the Town Communal Property Office, Nikolay found a new position with the Department of Industrial Development of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, which recruited building engineers to work on various construction projects at industrial sites owned by the state.



Nikolay (Kolya) Gavriylovich Berezhnuy, Anna (Nyusya) Gariylovna Berezhnaya, Pyetr (Petya) Gavriylovich Berezhnuy. Kharkov, Kharkovskyy

“Industrialization” was the slogan of those days. People and resources were mobilized like in wartime for the enormous countrywide enterprise. Once a project was finished at one site, the engineers, technicians, and workers were moved to the next place where a new factory was to be constructed. This job paid better than in Slavyansk, but it was a nomadic life that didn’t allow the families to put down roots in any one location and involved constantly moving from one town to another. However, Nikolay considered this to be good, steady work that allowed Katya to stay home and take care of their sons and household.

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1. See the chapter “Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy.”
 2. Russian Revolution of 1918–1922.
 3. Nickname for Nikolay.
 4. *Gorkomkhos*—acronym for *Gorodskoye Kommunalnoye Khosyaistvo*—the Town Communal Property.
 5. *Byelogvardyeyets*—a serviceman of the White Guard, but the name was used to apply to anyone who served in the White Army during the Civil War in Russia.



Tatyana Gavriylovna Berezhnaya

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

When Tanya graduated from the dental school in Kharkov, she elected to have her internship in the town of Yuzovka, where at that time our father was living with our youngest brother, Pyetya.

It was in Yuzovka that Tanya met a young Jewish man, Lyeva Tatarsky, who intensively courted her and charmed her with his attention. Lyeva was able to win Tanya's heart, and she was seriously considering him as a good prospect for marriage. His family background was good. His father was a doctor and lived in the town of Rostov-on-Don. His father's sister and a brother, Solomon Moissyeyevich Tatarsky, were living together in the town of Yuzovka. They were from a formerly wealthy Jewish family whose parents, before the Revolution owned a mill that was taken from them by the Soviet government.

Before our father decided to return with small Pyetya to his hometown of Slavyansk, Lyeva, as everybody called him for short, asked Gavriyl Danilovich for the hand of his daughter, Tanya, in marriage.

Being a very devoted Christian, our father was not very happy to see his daughter marrying a Jew, and he stated one condition for Lyeva. If he wanted to marry his daughter, he had to be baptized in the Christian Orthodox faith, and the wedding had to be performed in an Orthodox church. Well, Lyeva agreed, because he was so much in love with the beautiful Tatyana. They had to arrange for his baptism, which had to be followed by the traditional Christian Orthodox marriage ceremony.

Because the village church was less conspicuous than the cemetery church in Slavyansk, which had not been closed yet in 1922 by the Soviets, Tanya went to our father's native village, where Lyeva was unknown, to make the preparations for Lyeva's baptism, to be followed by their church wedding. Indeed, the

wedding took place without fanfare in the small village of Nikolskoye in the presence of her father and all members of the Berezhnoy family living there.

When I and my husband suddenly left Nikitovka and arrived in the town of Yuzovka, Lyeva had a large apartment that he shared with several young men. But when Lyeva and Tanya got married in Nikolskoye and returned to Yuzovka, they moved to their own apartment. Right from the first months, Lyeva was spending more time in his old apartment in the company of his boyfriends than with his new bride. Tanya complained to me that she was not very happy about it, but she decided to give him some time to get used to being married. For a while it seemed that they were adjusting to each other.

When my daughter was born in January 1923, it was Tanya and Lyeva who took her, without our knowledge, to the church and baptized her—they knew that I could lose my work at the Rabfak if I did this myself.

In the summer of 1924¹ my sister Tanya told me that the relations between her and Lyeva were becoming more and more tense every day, especially after she found out that Lyeva's friendship with his male friends was of a homosexual nature, and she told him that she would leave him. He began to lock her up in the apartment for the whole day until he returned from work. Tanya became desperate and decided to run away from him to the only place she knew, Lyeva's aunt's and uncle's apartment. So, that winter, one evening she went to bed early. When she found a moment that he was not watching her, she sneaked out, barefoot and wearing only a nightgown, and began to run on the sidewalk that was covered with snow. Lyeva ran after her, caught her on the street, and brought her back.

The next day Tanya had a high fever, and the doctor diagnosed it as pneumonia. It was a very long and painful illness and convalescence period. Since Lyeva had to work, he asked his aunt to stay with Tanya and to take care of her. His uncle, Solomon Moissyeyevich Tatarsky, was coming from work to Lyeva's apartment where his sister was preparing the meals for all of them. He was also helping his sister take care of Tanya. As Tanya began to improve, she was crying a lot and didn't want to eat, and Solomon Moissyeyevich sat near her bed and tried to cheer her up.

All this time Lyeva continued to visit his boyfriends in the evenings, leaving Tanya in the company of his aunt and uncle. It was on one of those evenings that Tanya shared with them that she was very unhappy and desperate and told them about Lyeva's secret double life. She complained that for a long time Lyeva kept her locked up all day and night in the apartment, because she had told him that she would leave him.

Meanwhile, Solomon Moissyeyevich fell in love with the beautiful Tatyana. One day when his sister was not in the room, he promised Tanya that he would help her run away from Lyeva, but she had to have patience until he could arrange everything well.

Solomon Moissyeyevich Tatarsky worked in the Donetsk Regional *Zagotzerno*² office. Although he was a son of the mill owner, he was able to maintain this good employment because there were not many experts who had such good knowledge of all the characteristics of various types of grains. He was also appreciated by his superiors for his experience and the skills that he'd learned while working at his father's mill, such as the right proportions in mixing different kinds of grains for milling to obtain good qualities of flour for bread.

Solomon Moissyeyevich was able to arrange to be transferred to another office of *Zagotzerno* in the town of Yasynovataya. After he got an apartment there, he came back to Yuzovka and, during the hours when his nephew was at work, rescued Tanya.

Lyeva never even imagined that it was his uncle who helped his wife to escape. The first place that Lyeva went to look for her was in Slavyansk at her father's home. Not finding her there, he enlisted Tanya's brother Ivan to search for her at all of the Berezhnoy relatives. They went together to the village of Nikolskoye to search for her. Then Lyeva and Ivan came to the village of Nyzhnyaya Krynka to see if Tanya had come to hide in our home. They also visited her sister Nyusya in Kharkov, hoping to find her there.

After several months Solomon Moissyeyevich confronted his nephew and told him that all this time Tanya had been living with him, that they were in love, and that they expected a baby. He asked Lyeva to give her a divorce, so they could get married. When Lyeva began to object, his uncle presented him a choice: either to do it voluntarily, or Tanya would go to court and ask for

a divorce on the grounds that he was a homosexual, which Lyeva was trying to hide. Lyeva chose to give up, and Solomon and Tanya got married as soon as they received an official divorce document.

Solomon was several years older than Tanya and was not a very attractive man, but he had a very amiable personality and, most important, he adored Tanya. They had a very happy marriage that was blessed by the birth on April 16, 1927 of their daughter Mariana, whom they called Murochka. After several years of living in Yasynovataya, Solomon Moissyeyevich was again transferred to work in the regional office of *Zagotzerno* in the town of Yuzovka, which by then had been renamed Stalino by the Soviets. Tanya was hired by the Town Commissariat of Health as a dentist for the town's schools. She made regular visits to all the schools in town and performed dental check-ups and dental repairs to children right on the school premises.

Lyeva consoled himself by marrying for the second time. And, as it became known in the Tatarsky family, he treated his new wife in the same manner as he had treated Tanya, locking her in the apartment and not allowing her to leave home, while he maintained his secret life with his homosexual boyfriends. This young woman was not as lucky as Tanya in finding help to escape from her husband, and her end was tragic. One evening when Lyeva returned from work, he found that his wife had committed suicide by hanging herself on the wardrobe bar.



PART FOUR

Life in the Socialist Soviet Union



Uncle Pyetr Returns from Hiding

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

In the late fall of 1922, my uncle Pyetr, who escaped from CheKa in Feodosia, went to visit his sister Marusya and her husband Nikandr at the Belyayevka station, which was closest to Kharkov, where he was hiding. He didn't find them there; however, the station janitor told him what had happened to his former stationmaster.

After visiting his brother-in-law and his sister Marusya and hearing about the unfortunate incident that they had to endure, my uncle Pyetr hoped to find out from his brother Mikhail what was going on in Feodosia, if it was safe to return there to his family. So, he suddenly arrived in Nikitovka to visit my father, who hadn't had any news from him for about two years.

My father told his brother, "On his way from Feodosia, before returning home, Orest stayed for a few months with our sister Marusya and her husband, Nikandr, in their new place in the village of Alexyeyevka, near the Likhachevo station." He told his brother about Nikandr's undeserved imprisonment by the CheKa and about the trouble he had to go through trying to get his job back. And, of course, about the problems in the new place where they now lived, that they didn't even have a door and had to climb in and out of the house through the window. After hearing this story my uncle commented, "It sounds very funny, but it's really not a laughing matter! Only to think about all the humiliation that he and his family went through makes you wonder about this new government. It couldn't have happened during the good old days in Russia."

Uncle Pyetr had already heard in Kharkov that there was a new policy dispatched from Moscow regarding the specialists on the railroads and in other industries. Bolsheviks finally realized that their policy of eliminating the "enemies of the people" had

gone too far. The Central Communist Party Committee had issued an order to stop the overzealous GPU⁴ agents who, like their predecessors of CheKa, were continuing the persecution of railroad stationmasters and other specialists. And those whom they had not grabbed yet were so threatened they didn't wait their turn to finish in the cellars of the secret political police; they ran away and stayed in hiding.

The railroads remained without qualified personnel, and the whole rail system was deteriorating so rapidly that it was on the brink of collapse. The changed policies from Moscow were being implemented to stop this purge and to rehire those returning to previous places of employment, either to their old jobs, or at the other stations where the old stationmasters and specialists did not return.

My father confirmed that at the Nikitovka station the railroad employees knew this new regulation, and many old specialists were accepted with open arms by the railway authorities and rehired. Uncle Pyetr decided that it was safe to return home to Feodosia. He stayed with his brother only one day, and they had plenty to talk about what had happened to them during this short but tumultuous period.

The most important news was about their father's death. My father told him, "Orest alone represented the whole Gladky family at our father's funeral. But now we have to decide how we will take care of our mother." Pyetr promised that, as soon as he settled in Feodosia, he would take care of their mother, and he even considered taking her there to live with him.

Then my father recounted to his brother what I told him about what happened to my uncle Pyetr's family after he escaped to Kharkov while I remained in Feodosia.⁵ He listened with great anxiety as my father told him that the day after his departure, the CheKa's agents searched his house, that I was arrested and CheKa questioned me about his whereabouts. But he was glad to hear that when I left Feodosia all in his family were alive and, although short of food, were surviving by bartering all they could. This made him feel justified in leaving the town in a hurry as he had.

However, Uncle Pyetr's mood quickly changed when my father told him that only a few months ago, that summer, his son Boris stayed in Nikitovka in our home for about two months. And my father recounted in detail what had happened at that time.

"One day, near the end of my shift at the telegraph, the assistant stationmaster called me, 'Mikhail Makarovitch, some vagrant boy is asking for you. He is telling us that his name is Boris Gladky and that he is your nephew, a son of your brother Pyetr. Would you please come and see him?'"

My father looked at his brother, expecting him to be surprised, and indeed he was. He continued, "Well, I came down to his office and found a boy who was dressed in old, worn-out clothes and shoes, very dirty and smelling from not washing for a long time."

He again looked at his brother and explained, "You know, Pyetr, I saw Boris only once when he was a small child and wouldn't recognize him now. So, I asked him to tell me all about his family—names of the father, mother, and sisters, the town where they lived, where his father worked. And, indeed, everything he told me was correct. He even corrected me by telling me that his real mother was dead and that he had a stepmother and her name. Well, dear Pyetr, I knew that it was really your son."

"My God, what had happened to him?" exclaimed Pyetr.

My father continued, "I made him wait until my shift ended and brought him home, where I presented him to Vera and Igor as their cousin. Vera immediately told him to remove all his clothes, prepared him a bath, ordered him to wash himself well, and gave him something clean to wear. Bathed and clean, he looked much better. Only then did she admit him for supper. Vera washed and disinfected his clothes, which were infested with lice, and she repaired and ironed them."

My uncle was shaking his head in disbelief. "What happened to him? Why did he run from home?"

Then my father recounted to his brother the very sad story, which Boris told him, that soon after his father was gone and Orest departed home, they didn't have anything to eat. Then his small sister Ksenia died, and after that their stepmother had kicked out his sister Lida and him; they became homeless and lived on the streets of Feodosia. Then one day Boris accidentally got in the wrong freight car to sleep during the night and awoke in some unknown railroad station far from Feodosia. A gang of vagrant men befriended him, and he traveled with them on the railroads across the country. When the gang happened to travel

through Nikitovka, Boris remembered that he had his uncle here."

My father rested for a while and then continued, "Boris stayed in our home the whole summer. Well, he seemed to be happy, and I told him that he could stay with us for as long as necessary, until we heard something from his father."

My uncle anxiously asked his brother, "Well, what happened after that?"

"Well, everything was all right until it came time for the schools to begin, and I told Boris that we should soon go and enroll him in the school," replied my father, "He didn't tell me anything, but I saw that he didn't like the idea too much. This conversation with him happened the day I received my monthly salary.

"The next morning, I woke up and before breakfast asked both of my children, Igor and Vera, where Boris was. They didn't know and also wondered where he could have gone so early in the morning. After breakfast Vera asked me to give her money to buy bread. I opened my desk drawer where I kept my money and found that the money had disappeared. All our money for the whole month was gone!"

"My dear brother!" exclaimed Uncle Pyetr. "It seems impossible!"

"Yes, impossible, but true!" answered my father emphatically and added, "And that's not all. Boris had also grabbed my good boots, my autumn coat, and a few other winter items—that rascal!"

My father felt like justifying himself and said, "You should remember, my dearest brother, that I invited Boris to stay with us as long as it was necessary; he didn't have to remain homeless anymore. But he did choose to return to his vagrant life."

His brother was completely mortified after hearing this story. He covered his eyes with the palms of his hands and, shaking his head, repeated, "God, my dear God, my dear God..."

"One more important bit of news that Boris told me," remembered my father. "He had returned once to Feodosia and found that Lida was married." My uncle couldn't believe that his small daughter Lidochka was married. He was grateful when my sister Vera found Lida's address, which she had kept after writing a letter to her from Boris.

This story made my uncle very upset, especially that we didn't

know where Boris was now. Uncle Pyetr reflected aloud with a sorrowful voice, "What a terrible childhood my children have had! To think that I considered that my second wife could be an excellent mother for them! Who could have guessed at that time what an awful woman she really was..."

Then after a long pause he added, "But in the end, it is I who should be blamed for what happened to my children! I was in such a hurry to save my own skin and did not consider what could happen to my family..."

Uncle Pyetr departed the next day on the first train to Crimea.



My Cousin Lida

By Orest M. Gladky

When my uncle, Pyetr Makarovich Gladky,¹ returned to Feodosia, he was rehired as a railroad stationmaster.² However, he couldn't find his wife. Somebody else was living in his house and didn't know anything about his family. Right away the railway administration gave him an apartment to live in and food coupons for bread and other products.

As soon as he could, Pyetr Makarovich went to see his daughter Lida at her cottage, located in the poorest part of the town. He could not imagine that his young daughter could be married because she was not yet fifteen years old; therefore, it was with trepidation that he waited for her to open the door.

"Who is there?" he heard her young voice.

"Lidochka,³ it is your Papa."

The door opened, and he saw his little Lida, a pale and skinny teenager, but with the expression of a grownup on her face. Lida threw her arms around her father's neck, and they hugged each other right in the middle of the open door, both crying and repeating kind words to each other.

"Lidochka, my dear little girl, Lidochka!" her father repeated.

"Papochka,⁴ Papochka, I knew you would come back, Papochka," Lida said. Then her face lit up, as she looked at her father and said, "They didn't arrest you. It was good that you escaped on time!"

The reunion was both tender and sorrowful because Lida recounted to her father in minute detail all that had happened after he unexpectedly left home and she and her brother Boris remained with their stepmother and little half-sister, Ksenia.

It happened that when their stepmother remained without any support for the three children, she at first provided for food by bartering all of her husband's clothing. Men's clothing was very valuable in those days, when many Whites were still flocking into town. They needed to find some decent clothes to change from

their fisherman's and peasant's outfits, which they had exchanged for White uniforms in a hurry in the villages. But clothes were bartered very quickly. When famine engulfed the town, other household items were not valued much in bartering and disappeared very quickly.

Lida recounted to her father that one morning the CheKa agents came into their house with two longshoremen, whom they ordered to take all furniture from the living room. They pulled out the black, shining grand piano and all upholstered furniture; the Oriental rug lying in the center of the room; her father's big desk, and a swivel chair, leaving all papers from the desk drawers scattered on the floor.

Then the agents instructed the two men to take the huge bookshelf. They gestured to throw the books down from the shelves. The men obeyed the order and pushed down the whole collection of classic books. The books fell down on the wooden floor with a "Poa-o-ah!" "Pa-o-ah!" sounds like the complaining sighs of wounded living creatures—echoing in the empty room.

When the men were gone, the children, who were observing from the hall this irreverent treatment of their father's prized possessions, rushed into the room and started to collect the books. Their stepmother ordered them to pile up the books in the corner of the empty room, and she gathered all her husband's papers in a basket and put it on top of the book tower. The empty room looked strange and scary to the children.

Lida explained what happened next. Their father had not returned home, and there had been no news from him. At their questions about the whereabouts of their father, the stepmother just said, "He went up North... I don't know where he is... He needs to be away..."

And then there was the problem with the bread. For several months they lived on very small rations, until all that could be bartered was gone. For a while they did without. Then their little half-sister, Ksenia, got very sick and died for lack of medicine and food. The famine had taken its toll on the weakest member of the family.

Lida said that after their half-sister, Ksenia, died, their stepmother became angry, wicked, and malicious with her stepchildren. She told Lida and Boris, "There is nothing left to eat... Get out on the streets and find it for yourself, like the other

children do. I cannot help you anymore!"

Lidochka at that time was almost thirteen years old, and Boris was almost ten. They walked out of their home onto Karantinnaya Street and went down to the town's center. Lida, being older, felt responsible for her brother's safety and held his hand tightly. As they approached the market, she thought that maybe they could find some leftovers in the refuse. But everything was cleaned up; only a few birds were finding something in the dust.

On the streets, people were moving slowly, like shadows; some were skinny, with hollow cheeks and rapacious eyes; the others were all swollen with their skin ready to burst from edema induced by hunger. Here and there, Lida and Boris could see on the sidewalks, lying close to the walls and fences, curled-up bodies of men and women who looked like they were dead or dying; some had eyes open wide and staring in one place; the others had covered their faces with their hands or clothing.

"Lida," asked Boris, "why are they lying on the streets? Don't they have a home?"

"I don't know, Boryk,⁵ maybe they are from out of town and don't have the money to buy tickets for the train."

Lida's story became more and more tragic as she described what happened to them that day and in the days thereafter. The whole first day sister and brother wandered on the streets. Young and inexperienced for such adventure and hungry more than in the morning, they returned to their home. But the house was locked and seemed to be empty. They went to the stepmother's brother's house, which was just across the courtyard, and found that it was empty and locked, too. They didn't expect to be locked out of their house and to be left alone at night on the street. The houses of their neighbors were empty and had been locked up for a long time, as they had all moved to the country, hoping to find food there.

It was becoming dark, and they decided to get into the center of town, where the streets were illuminated, and they went to the railroad station. There they found some children dressed in dirty and ragged clothing sleeping cuddled up next to each other. Hungry and tired, they sat near them and fell asleep, warmed by the other small bodies.

The coolness of the early morning and hunger woke them up. With dirty hands they rubbed their eyes. Slowly the others in the

group awakened, too. They met their night companions. Some of the oldest girls, who were already experienced in survival skills, were in charge of the group. They told them that they could stay with them and that they would be called simply by the slang names of Lidka and Bor'ka.

At first, they went regularly to their home to see if they could find their stepmother. Or... There was a glimmer of hope that maybe their father might even return to look for them. They also looked in the house of their stepmother's brother, but they always found both houses locked and empty.

Lida even found a piece of wrapping paper at the market, borrowed a pencil from somebody, and wrote a short message, which she put under the entrance door. The message was very simple: "Our dear stepmother and father: when you return, look for us in the port or the rail station. Ask homeless children, they will show you where we are. Lida and Boris."

Then, one day, they found somebody living in their home, and the woman chased them away, assuming they were beggars, "Go away—we don't have anything to eat ourselves." After that they did not visit their home anymore.

They survived through the whole summer staying with the group of homeless children. Among them Lidka found young girlfriends, and later she found some older guardians who knew how to survive. They brightened her days by listening to her young pain and bestowed on her an almost-motherly kindness. They had already seen life and understood everything better than the inexperienced Lidka. They knew where to look for refuse, where something edible could be found; they taught her how to steal a potato or a handful of other foodstuffs in the market, and how to recognize some edible plants growing along the abandoned railroad tracks. They taught her how to find a place to sleep at night, which was not so difficult in the summer in the Crimean seashore town. Sometimes they slept under an old fisherman's boat or on an abandoned barge, but more likely under the tables at the market. But in bad weather they went far on the unused railroad tracks and slept in an old abandoned freight car.

The fall was nearing, and Lidka's dirty and ragged clothes were not keeping her skinny body warm. In the fall the older girls introduced her to other means of survival in the company of men, mostly the longshoremen, who could steal in the port and were

generous with food and drinks. She learned quickly to drink *samogon*—it warmed her up in the cold weather and changed her gloomy mood to cheerful and lighthearted. It didn't take long to get used to what made the men happy and to feel free in their company. It helped her to rely less on stealing, which was becoming harder and harder during the famine. But, most important, she always saved some food to bring to her younger brother.

Many times, Lidka left Bor'ka by himself or with a group of other younger children somewhere to wait for her while she was going in search of food alone—it was easier without him hindering her moves. Bor'ka didn't like to be left alone, especially when he had to spend the night without his sister.

One gloomy and cold autumn day, Bor'ka was sitting in the harbor. With hungry eyes he observed the longshoremen as they were loading the ship with wheat grain. In the evening he went to the old outrigger where he usually met Lidka in the evening. He didn't have to wait long. Lidka came before dark with a bundle of old rags. As she greeted him, he smelled *samogon* on her breath.

"Boryechka," she called him with his pet name, "I brought you something to eat." She began to fuss around her brother and hurriedly disentangled dirty rags where she was hiding a piece of bread. "Look, Boryechka, it's real bread..." Bor'ka grabbed the piece of bread and started to swallow it with avidity, trying not to drop even one crumb of it.

Bor'ka was trembling from the cold and wet wind blowing from the sea and began to cry quietly. Once in a while he would whine, "Lidka, it's cold... Do you feel how the wind blows? Where are we going to sleep tonight?"

"Eat, Boryechka, eat, my little one, then I will put you to sleep and will warm you up."

Lidka was bustling near him preparing a sleeping nest on the bottom of the old outrigger with the bundle of rugs. "Don't you worry, Boryechka," she told him in a grown-up manner, "everything will be all right. You eat first, then say your prayers to God, and then lie here in your small bed... I will tell you a fairy tale... Tonight you will be warm, I will warm you up."

"I want to go home, Lidka," whined Bor'ka.

"Well, my dear Boryechka, tonight we will sleep here, and tomorrow we will go home. All right?" she consoled him.

"Where is our papa now?" asked Bor'ka, settling himself on the pile of rags.

"Papa had to go up North, my little one. He needed to do that. Stop crying, remember that you are a man, and men do not cry," explained Lidka.

"Why did he have to go up North?" insisted Bor'ka.

"You see, I think that here they were looking for him to arrest him... Only you should remember not to tell this to anybody!" she warned him sternly.

"And why did they want to arrest him?"

"Well, Boryechka, ...probably, because he was White. I heard someone saying that Bolsheviks are arresting all Whites... And sometimes they shoot them on the seashore... Or send them far away and they never return... You understand?" explained Lidka.

But Bor'ka did not understand its meaning. He only figured out that indeed his father had to go away from here, where he could be arrested or maybe shot.

"Well, have you finished your supper?" asked Lidka and added, "Now pray to God and thank Him for it."

"I don't know how to pray... I forgot it."

"Let's do it together—I will prompt you." And Lida remembered as her own mother had taught her to pray. "First, stand on your knees, and hold your little hands in front of you like this... And repeat after me, 'Dear God, thank you for the bread... and water... that we were able to find today...'"

Boris was repeating after her, "Dear God..."

Lida continued, "Thank you for every-everything... and for keeping us alive... Save all of us, hungry children... and our papa... and stepmother... And all good people... Good night, God!"

Bor'ka was repeating after her, "...Good night, God!"

"Now cross yourself... like that... And bow to the ground to God... Just like that. Now lie down. I will warm you up. You will feel good now. What kind of a fairy tale do you want to hear?" she asked him.

"Tell me the story about the hungry boy who was drifting alone on the waves of the sea and how the magic boat brought him to the Nourishing Island. And how the boy was eating and drinking for three days and three nights."

The children accommodated themselves at the bottom of the

old outtrigger. Lidka snuggled up close to Bor'ka's small body. The smell of *samogon* was bothering him, and he buried his face in his sister's bony chest. Lidka pulled some old rags over them and tried to tuck them under her brother's body. When both of them disappeared under the rags, she began to tell her brother the fairy tale, which she remembered from her early childhood years, inventing portions that she forgot. Boris felt the warmth of his sister's body and, as he slowly warmed up, he fell asleep listening to her calm voice.

The next morning, Bor'ka remembered how he observed the ship and how the longshoremen were loading the wheat grain and asked his sister, "Lidka, why they are loading the wheat to send it abroad and don't give it to us here?"

"What are you talking about? What wheat?" asked Lidka. Bor'ka told her what he had seen in the harbor the day before.

"That's good, Bor'ka. This morning we will go collect the spilled grain from the port grounds."

"You think so?!" exclaimed Bor'ka. "They have so many guards there! Even the longshoremen were thoroughly searched when they were leaving from work!"

"Well, Boryechka, I will go by myself, and you will wait for me," reassured his sister.

But Bor'ka protested, "I am afraid, Lidka—they could kill you!"

"But, dear Boryechka, I am a woman... And for a woman it's easier... Because you know, all *muzhiks* are alike..." Lidka tried to explain to him. Bor'ka didn't understand anything from her explanation, but it calmed him down. He believed that his sister was smarter than he was because she was older and she had attended school for several years and knew how to read and write; he had attended the school for only one year before the civil war started, and then the schools had closed.

When Lidka came to the port that morning, there were many homeless children making their way into the port to collect the precious wheat grains on the ground. The guards were not able to cope with the large number of children, who, like locusts, were climbing through all the holes of the fenced port. Neither the shouting nor shooting in the air was able to stop their invasion. Only when the Red Army soldiers arrived, called in on emergency by the Soviet export authorities, were they able to

contain and force the retreat of the children. In the eyes of the fat export agents, "the children's mob" threatened to delay the scheduled shipment of the grain abroad. That grain was an exchange for the foreign equipment badly needed for Soviet industry. But the young and hungry "criminals" were happy and well fed for several days by the grain they'd collected from the port ground.

One cold autumn day, the rain drizzled without interruption. On such days it was difficult to find something to eat. But Bor'ka was lucky. He spent the day close to the rail station and came to the platform when the passenger trains were stopping. One passenger, getting out of the train, gave him a small package. In it were a remnant of a piece of bread and a piece of salami. It was a rarity to even see it. Boris avidly started to eat, but right away remembered Lidka and divided it into two parts and wrapped up her half, while swallowing up his part in no time. All day he had been trying to find his sister in the places where they usually met. The evening was nearing, and he could not find her. His hunger didn't allow Bor'ka to get the food he had out of his mind, but he stubbornly held the wet package under his arm, hoping to find his sister.

It was almost dark, and the cold of the nearing night was getting under his ragged clothing. The drizzling rain pierced the air and penetrated the damp rags. Boris knew that on such nights they could not sleep in the outrigger and usually slept in the freight car. It was dark when he reached what he thought were the abandoned rails, and he climbed into one of the open freight cars. He curled up in the corner squeezing the wet package with the sister's half of the food and fell sound asleep. He didn't hear the train which the car was attached to started moving, taking him far away from his hometown...

Lidka searched for several weeks for her brother and, not knowing what happened to him, cried for a while, especially when she was drunk, and complained to her girlfriends that she was now alone in the whole world.

Before winter arrived, Lidka and her girlfriends found an old abandoned cottage; it was full of holes, but to them it looked fit for human habitation, and they settled down there to wait till the winter was over. It was a damp and dirty place, with a few small windows and dark, like a wild beast's den, but it did protect the

homeless children from the rain and cold wind. Slowly it was filled up with their belongings—all kinds of ragged clothing, old blankets, cans, bottles, and some food, stolen or earned by the girls for their favors with men.

Every girl had her own place, where she kept her personal items, and nobody infringed on the other's property even if it was a piece of bread hidden for a rainy day. It seems very strange, but this unbearable misfortune in which these homeless girls found themselves never provoked any discord among them about the most important thing, food. And if one of them came home hungry in the evening, all of them tried eagerly to share their meager supper with her.

Their male guests, whom they had met before in the dark corners of the town, were now coming into the girls' home. Many of their guests were homeless older boys, or men, but some were adult longshoremen from the port. All of them paid their lover-girls either with a piece of bread, or other food, or with the large inflated money bills. The wine and *samogon*, which their guests brought, warmed their small shivering bodies and put them in a cheerful mood, which sometimes became exuberant. It was not rare that some lovers would beat their girls. Then the darkness of the den would resound with crying, sorrowful moans, and complaints of a young voice hoarse from alcohol and cold. It was dreadful, the life of these young beings, who were not women yet but who had grown up very fast in the battle for survival.

After many days of thick darkness in Lidka's gloomy life, a ray of light came out and brought her some happiness. In this poor and ugly cottage, she encountered a man, a waggoner from the port, who with his caresses and kind words awakened in her a feeling of love. She believed in his affection and gave him her young life unconditionally by leaving her girlfriends and going to live with him. It happened when she was not yet fifteen years old that she left her childhood behind somewhere in the fog, and adulthood had not yet arrived.

The waggoner, who took her into his home at first as a lover and housekeeper, grew fond of her and liked her so much that he registered with her legally as husband and wife. He was much older than he appeared to be and was a coarse man who liked to drink. When he was drunk, he would sometimes beat Lidka for no reason at all. But those occasions when he was nice to her

warmed her poor little heart; she had yearned for human affection and kindness, and she repaid him with her devotion and early feelings of an awakening womanhood.

Lidka left behind the days of misery and hunger, of the constant search for food, and nights in the dirty, cold cottage with the men guests, *samogon*, and violence. But the new days were not without sorrow. Drinking and beating were not completely gone from her life, but now they were from a man who called her his wife. Now she lived in a house that she could call her home, which was clean and warm. Now there was a man whom she could give all of what was left of her young and crippled life.

That's what Lida conveyed to her father in their long and emotional reunion. She told him also that once, when her brother returned to Feodosia and came to see her, her husband had not allowed her to keep him in their home, and Boris left with his gang of vagrant companions. One consolation was that she gave Boris her address, and he promised to write to her. And she showed her father a letter she'd received from Boris, written by her cousin Vera when he was visiting Uncle Misha in Nikitovka.

When Lida finished telling her story to her father, she said, "Now, Papochka, you are here, and we are all alive, except for little Ksenia. Boris will come home again—he promised me that! Our days of sorrow and fear are behind us."

Her father wondered, "Lidochka, my dear girl, how have you grown up in such a short time! Instead of me consoling you, it is you who are consoling me. Yes, let us be happy about finding each other!"

Lida offered her father some bread and a piece of lard to eat. He stayed with her the whole morning until it was time for him to go for his shift at the railroad station.

Lida told her father, "Papa, I don't want my husband to find out, at least not right away, that you have returned to town." And she explained, "I am afraid that he would expect too many favors from you, as a stationmaster." But she reassured him, "He is a good man, Papochka, but life now is so hard for everybody. And he might think that you are rich, or that you can find him a better job. With time, I will prepare him for the news."

Pyetr Makarovich observed that his small Lida was telling him this not like a young and innocent teenager, but as a mature woman, experienced in the nature of men. And he praised Lida

for her wisdom, "My dear girl, you are reasoning better than me, a grown-up man."

Lida instructed her father further, "You may come and visit me sometimes in the morning, when my husband is at work." Then she assured her father that he should not worry about her, "My husband is much older than me, Papa. He works as a waggoner at the port and has a way of getting some food there, so we always have bread on the table. If you need something, tell me. I could save you some bread or other things he brings home."

Pyetr Makarovitch left his daughter's home reassured that she didn't need his help at this time.

Through some of his railroad workers, Pyetr Makarovitch found out that his wife lived in a nearby village with her brother and her niece. He went to the village without notifying his wife that he was coming. He decided that he would not tell her anything about finding Lida, nor what his daughter had told him about what had happened to them. He wanted to hear the story from his wife's lips and her explanation of the events.

His wife was indeed very surprised to see her husband in the village, and she started to cry right away and to tell him that their daughter Ksenia died from a childhood illness during the famine in 1921. Then, with the expression of a martyr on her face, she hurled reproaches at her stepchildren. She complained that after all family possessions were bartered for food, Lida and Boris started to look for bread with the gangs of hungry children on the streets in Feodosia. She said they did quite well in feeding themselves, but they were not returning home, where she, their poor stepmother, had nothing to eat.

She told her husband that she desperately searched for them on the streets. When she finally found them, she told them to return home and that then they all would go to live in the village with her brother and his daughter. "But," she said, "The children laughed in my face and told me that I was not their mother and that they didn't need me anymore." And she pathetically added, "Oh! How I cried and begged them to come with me! But they just teased me with the food pulled out of their pockets! And do you know what Lida answered me? 'You want to take our bread away from us! You are hungry, and we are not! Why should we return to live with you? You didn't feed us before—how would you feed us now?' Did you hear what she told me? And this was what I

had in return for all my sacrifices for them! Only to hear that I am not their mother!"

And his wife burst into loud crying and through her tears reproached her husband, "And you! You abandoned me with y-y-ou-ou-r children... without any means to live on. Almost two years! Not even one word from you. How could I provide for y-y-ou-ou-r children? People were starving on the streets—my own daughter died from starvation. Maybe if I had had something to give her to eat, she would have survived... Tell me, what could I have done?... What could I have done?"

Pyetr Makarovich listened to his wife's story without interrupting her. He felt guilty about abandoning her and his children. He felt that he had an obligation to make up to them for his negligence. He needed time to sort out who was telling the truth—his wife or Lida. His wife had put a tiny seed of doubt in his mind. It was most hurtful for him to find out that Lida's version of why they'd become homeless was completely different from the one his wife told him.

In his mind the words of his beloved daughter Lidochka resounded, "Our stepmother told us to go out on the streets and to provide for ourselves as the other children did... We became homeless because when we returned home that evening and many days thereafter we found the door locked, and our stepmother disappeared without telling us where she was going."

"No," was flashing through his mind, "my little Lida could never lie to me. And Boris, he also told his uncle in Nikitovka 'Our stepmother kicked us out of the house...'" And he concluded, "Children must be telling the truth..." But he felt that he was also to blame for what had happened.

He told his wife to collect her belongings and their remaining furniture that she'd taken with her to the village. They hired a peasant to transport it, loaded all on a wagon, and returned to live together in Feodosia in the apartment given to him by the railway administration.

When Pyetr Makarovich told his wife that he had found Lida, and that she was married and living right here in town, his wife played the role of a wronged woman who was offended by his children. She had an outburst of rage, screaming that she didn't want to see Lida in their house and furthermore absolutely prohibited him to see his daughter. He understood that the

woman he had married because he hoped that she would be a good mother for his children had not only betrayed his expectations but also was now standing as an obstacle between him and his children.

He told Lida about her stepmother's outburst, and she was very afraid that her stepmother would find out about her father seeing her. She didn't want to see her father being tortured for this by his wife. And she didn't want yet to let her husband meet her father. But most of all, she was afraid to tell him that her stepmother had prohibited her from stepping foot in her father's house. She knew that her husband, who was the boss in his own home, would not understand the submission of her father to his wife. She and her father could not see each other in her house either because if her husband found out that a man was coming to see her in his absence, he would give her a good beating! For all of these reasons, poor Lida and Pyetr Makarovich had to see each other secretly in the small streets of the town, where nobody could see them and inadvertently tell her stepmother or her husband.

Having settled the situation and relationships with his wife and daughter, Pyetr Makarovich had now to solve the problem of what to do with his own mother. If he had to take her into his home, he would aggravate his relations with his wife. But when his wife heard that the cottage of her mother-in-law would be sold, she agreed to take her to live with them. However, from the first days of living together, it became clear that the two women could not stay under one roof.

One problem was that his wife was eager to snatch the money from the sale of the cottage from her mother-in-law. She prompted poor Pyetr Makarovich to make his mother pay for her upkeep, reasoning that the money was becoming worthless every day with inflation—a reasoning that Pyetr Makarovich considered correct—but his mother was not yielding, claiming that her son had to provide for her.

The second problem was that his mother, who all her life had commanded her husband and her sons, wanted also to command in her son's home. But her daughter-in-law, who had the same character as the old woman, or even worse, did not intend to have her mother-in-law boss her around.

The situation became so bad that Pyetr Makarovich had to get

in touch with his brother Mikhail and ask him to take his mother to Nikitovka to stay with him. My father sent me to Feodosia to bring my grandmother to Nikitovka.

But the old woman couldn't get along with her granddaughter Vera, either, because here she also wanted to be the mistress of the house. But Vera, who had been managing the house for several years, couldn't stand grandmother's bossing her around and telling her what to do. Fights between the grandmother and granddaughter were so intense and kept everybody nervous that my father got in touch with his sister Marusya, who, knowing well how shrewish her mother was, reluctantly agreed to take her to live with her in the village of Alekseyevka. Her mother lived with her until she was very old; longevity ran in her family.

And now, what had happened to Lida's younger brother, Boris, or as he was now called, Bor'ka, who fell asleep in the freight car and was awakened in the strange railroad station? Boris told me his story in 1928, when I was in Rostov-on-Don taking the exams for correspondence courses I was enrolled in. My sister Anya gave me his address, and I saw him several times.

Boris told me that he had traveled for a couple of years in the empty freight cars across the vast extensions of the new Soviet Union. He was adopted by a gang of vagrant men from whom he learned how to smoke, drink *samogon*, play cards, and swear. From them he learned how to survive by stealing, cheating, and swindling.

He said that in the beginning he missed his sister, Lidka, and cried a lot at night cuddled up somewhere in the corner of the freight car. But he did not know how to return home from the railroad stations with very strange-sounding names where the erratic travel of the gang took him. It was much safer for him to stay with the vagrant gang, where he always had something to eat and was looked after by his protectors, who in their peculiar way, showed him their affection and caring, which he needed sometimes more than food or shelter.

The gang did not stay very long in one place for fear of being caught for stealing. But the men favored the large railroad stations with many abandoned tracks and freight cars, where they could have shelter from the rain and cold weather and a place to sleep at night. There they also could find a constant traffic of many trains with a steady flow of the passengers from whom they could easily

steal pocketbooks, wallets, and luggage.

In fact, Bor'ka became a very skillful petty thief and knew how to sneak between the passengers and quietly, without being felt or detected by his victims, to remove their money or wallets and slip away without being noticed. Then he would pass the catch to the standing nearby beggar who was a member of the gang.

By that time Bor'ka was so involved in the communal life of the gang that he only occasionally remembered his home, Lidka, and his father. Then, one winter day, the gang decided to move to the warm climate, and Bor'ka found himself in Crimea again and remembered that Feodosia was his hometown. He longed to see his sister and maybe to find his father, and he convinced his companions to visit the port town to try their luck there.

It took him a couple of days of wandering from place to place in the port, railroad station, and in town, looking for the gangs of homeless boys and girls and asking if anybody knew where to find his sister Lidka. Finally, he found one gang that showed him where she lived. It was an emotional reunion, but Lidka's husband was not disposed to add another mouth to feed, and she had no other choice but to let Bor'ka return to his vagrant gang. She wrote down her address for him, and he promised her to keep in touch by mailing a postcard from time to time, and he promised to visit her the next time the gang would be in Crimea.

Then one day, the gang arrived with the freight train at the station of Nikitovka. Bor'ka told his companions that he wanted to see if he could stay with his Uncle Misha for a few months, if he would keep him, which his uncle did. After a few days in Nikitovka, the gang decided to move south to the station of Rostov-on-Don. Boris promised them that if he didn't like staying with his uncle, he would join them there. And they agreed that in case he stayed here, they would look for him in Nikitovka when they returned north.

Boris told me that he liked staying with his uncle and his cousins Vera and Igor, although he felt that Vera was too strict with him and was always annoying him by telling him to wash himself, to take a bath, and change his clothes. And being used to the vagrant life, he felt restless and missed his gang companions. He asked Vera to write a postcard to his sister Lida and even got an answer from her there. He stayed the whole summer with his Uncle Misha.

Then his uncle told him that in the fall he should go to school. Boris didn't like the idea of going to school and decided that it was the time to join his gang in Rostov-on-Don. Of course, he needed some money and boots for the coming winter, and a few other things. Without being ashamed or remorseful, Boris told me that he waited until his Uncle Misha received his monthly salary, and in the evening, sneaked into his room and took the money. The next morning, he got up very early; on his way out of the house he grabbed the boots and other things he'd prepared ahead of time and boarded the first freight train going south.

At the station of Rostov-on-Don, the militiamen were over the tracks catching the free-riders, and they arrested many vagrants, including Boris. After checking their documents, the men were not put in prison—they were not considered to be “the enemies of the people” or political enemies of the Bolsheviks—they were put in the freight cars on various trains and were told not to return to this station anymore because if they did, then they would be arrested and thrown in prison.

But Boris, because he was under age and had no documents at all, was placed in the town's orphanage. There he finally received some formal schooling, learned how to read and write, and attended some vocational trade classes. He wrote several letters to his sister Lida and found out that his father had returned home, but Lida warned him that their stepmother would not let him live with them. She suggested that it was better for him to stay in the orphanage until they would keep him there.

At the age of sixteen Boris was placed to do odd jobs at the local movie theater in Rostov-on-Don. There he learned from the old projectionist his work and in time became a film projectionist himself. When I visited him, he was planning to visit his father and sister in Feodosia. When by my father's request I went to Feodosia to bring my grandmother from my uncle Pyetr's home to Nikitovka, I also visited my cousin Lida. She told me the same story that she told her father about what had happened to her and her brother Boris. I could not recognize Lida; she had changed so much in less than two years.

It is with profound sadness and pain that I remember now that young and lively girl *Lidochka* and her younger brother Boris, whose lives should have flown on a completely different course. But they were steered to an unexpected and tragic path, and their

lives were crippled and distorted, as were many millions of other young and fragile lives at that trying time in Russia.

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1. See the chapter “Makar Timofeyevich Gladky’s Eldest Sons”
 2. See the chapter “A Defeat in Crimea.”
 3. See the chapter “Nikandr Yakovlyevich Medvyedev.”
 4. *Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravlyeniye*—Governmental Political Department (1922–1934), formerly CheKa (1917–1921)
 5. See the chapter “Bolsheviks in Feodosia.”



Polytechnization

By Antonina G. Gladky and Orest M. Gladky

In the early summer of 1920, before the school closed its doors for the summer vacation, the director of our Seven-Years Common Trade School in Nikitovka received an order from *Narobras*.¹ The order was to send some teachers for the summer courses to learn new methods of teaching before the new school year began in the fall. Several teachers, including me, were chosen to represent our school.

These retraining courses for selected teachers from across the Donetsk region were held in the town of Lugansk at the former pre-revolutionary technical school that had the equipment and shops for vocational training.

The old elementary and secondary school programs were now considered outdated for the revolutionary ideology in the proletarian society. It was considered that the old schools educated children to be “white-handed intellectuals.”² The proletarian doctrine of the Bolshevik government called for new types of schools that would train children to be the “horny-handed sons of toil.”³ It was for this new system of training children that the teachers were being reconditioned.

A new slogan had been issued from the Soviet central governmental offices in Moscow: “Polytechnization!” All educational journals and daily newspapers published flashy articles featuring all kinds of ideas on “polytechnization.” From the central offices down to the regional and local offices poured orders, instructions, circulars... Paper, paper, and still more paper! Many reams were written, read through and discussed, all about “polytechnization.” Then the time came to retrain the teachers on how to implement this “polytechnization” in their curriculum.

From the very first day, the training site resembled a beehive in a busy season. Men and women teachers stitched boots and shoes, made rivets, turned screw bolts and nuts, forged

horseshoes, made stools, bound books, made buckets... They wove, sawed, hammered, and banged, shouted, and made noise... They attended lectures on "polytechnization," on production methods, on the resistance of materials, on corrosion of metals, on scientific agriculture, on railway transport, on mining and metallurgy, and on many other worthy subjects. It was a hodgepodge of vocational, artisan, and industrial practical skills and the scientific lectures that were intermixed without any connection to each other—except that in the organizers' minds they somehow were related to this new concept of "polytechnization." Probably the reason for this odd selection was that, in a hurry to implement the orders from Moscow, the people they could find to teach these impromptu retraining courses and workshops were experienced only in those skills and subjects.

All trainees were busy; many were carried away with enthusiasm and, most important, all were well fed and satisfied with the free and abundant food prepared by the participants as a part of the food-preparation courses they were taking. All were hurrying to make shoe forms for their size, to make themselves shoes or boots, to sew extra uppers for the shoes, and to cut a few extra pairs of soles and heels to take home for later use. In short, all provided for themselves with everything and anything they could get their hands on, especially the items that were hard or impossible to find on the market.

Only occasionally in their few leisure moments did they ask themselves, "How are we going to fit all this 'polytechnization' into the school curriculum? How will we teach first-graders to read and write while they are learning to work on a lathe? How will we teach them to count while they are making the horseshoes in a forge with a heavy hammer in their hands?" They tried to brush aside these thoughts by reassuring themselves, "Moscow will send all the instructions about that!"

At the end of the two months, the retraining courses came to an end. A few days before, the director of the courses announced, "Comrades, tomorrow a comrade from the Central Committee Headquarters will give you a lecture on anti-religious training of children in school."

The next day, the enormous recreation hall was crowded with desks. Young and old, men and women teachers slowly made their way to the seats. The director was anxiously bustling about a

long hall, urging the slow ones to move faster, running in and out of the classrooms converted to dormitories, begging, demanding, and ordering people to hurry. At last, the recreation hall was filled to capacity and humming with a low murmur of voices and subdued conversations.

The lecturer arrived on time and stepped to the rostrum. The epaulets on his double-breasted former student's uniform jacket had been torn off and in place of the traditional metal buttons, the ordinary black ones had been sewn on. Very slowly he placed his saddle-shaped cap and heavy, bulging briefcase on the desk. From it he pulled a bundle of posters hand-printed with black, large, thick capital letters. Then he got out another equally large stack of papers covered with straight typewritten rows and carefully placed them in the middle of the table.

Methodically, he attached the posters on the walls using multiple drawing pins. The posters in big block letters proclaimed Bolshevik slogans:

"Down with religion!"

"Religion is the opiate of the people!"

"In a free state there is no room for religion!"

They went on and on in this religion-degrading tone. After hanging up the posters, the lecturer took his time to return to the rostrum, polished his pince-nez, and poured himself a glass of water. Then he drummed on the glass with a pencil until the audience came to attention and, finally, began his lecture.

"Comrades! Teachers! The revolution gave us half of our freedom. But we find ourselves still under the domination of religion. Religion not only denies us the possibility of knowing true freedom—it also hinders our revolutionary progress; therefore, we need to free ourselves from it. You, the builders of human souls, are called upon to free the children's minds from this unnecessary rubbish that religion has been proven to be. The greatest of socialist thinkers, Karl Marx, has said, 'Religion is the opiate of the people.'"

The speaker went on and on, reading from his copious notes, denouncing the evils of religion and emphasizing how it interferes with the Bolsheviks' agenda.

There was not a sound in the hall. The audience, with bent heads, persistently gazed at the floor. Not one pair of eyes was raised at the lecturer during his long address. The strange silence

and stillness made the comrade from the Central Committee nervous. He probably felt as if he was reading his lecture to an empty hall. Purposefully, several times he raised his voice, dropped it again, then stopped suddenly, and, as unexpectedly, began to shout, and stopped again without finishing the sentence. He tried every trick to make an impression on his audience, but the hall was dead; not the slightest sound came from the mass of people sitting in front of him.

At last, the two-hour lecture came to an end. The speaker took a glass of water and sipped slowly, waiting for some reaction from the teachers. But the hall remained quiet, and no one moved. The lecturer put down his glass, hurriedly pushed his notes back into the briefcase, and, almost running, rushed out of the hall. The teachers were stunned and didn't know how to react. They still sat quiet and motionless, till they heard the familiar voice of the director of the courses: "Comrades, break for lunch! After lunch, return here for questions on the lecture."

Getting up heavily from their seats, the teachers went to their rooms and then for lunch. Halfway along the hall one could hear hesitant attempts at conversation that stopped unfinished. All had a feeling of unpleasantness and disappointment; it was not quite disgust and not quite sadness. It felt like they had heard something shameful and, for this reason, the teachers avoided meeting each other's eyes or talking about it.

After lunch, the audience reassembled in the big hall as slowly and as unwillingly as before. When all the seats were occupied, the comrade from the Central Committee appeared again at the rostrum. "Has anyone any questions they wish to ask?" he addressed the silent teachers. He looked around over the bent heads staring at the floor and saw one hand raised high.

"Your question?" he asked almost cheerfully, being glad to have at least one response. There was a rustle of movement in the hall as all raised and turned their heads. All eyes were fixed on the young woman teacher who was already standing up.

"I have no questions to ask, but I wish to make a statement regarding the lecture," said the young woman resolutely, and she walked toward the rostrum. The lecturer made room for her. He was triumphant—at last he had broken the icy silence!

The young woman ascended the rostrum. Her head was slightly raised, as she looked straight at the seated people. Her

voice sounded firm and confident as she started to speak.

“One thousand nine hundred twenty years ago, Christ was born. One thousand nine hundred twenty years ago, by his birth, He brought to mankind the great truth, whereby the world recognized God. Christ brought the light and joy of personal contact with God and taught mankind to love Him and their fellow men. The life of Christ on earth, his teachings, and his sermons, are the foundations on which, up till now, we have built and will go on building the training and the instruction of children.”

Through a window the audience could see heavy gray clouds part, unveiling a patch of turquoise autumn sky. The sunlight spilled out bright rays and lighted up the golden hair of the young woman and, shining through the soft tendrils of her hair, made a bright halo round her head. At that moment she was extraordinarily beautiful and majestic. Her large, deep-blue eyes shone, and in them burned the unquenchable fire of faith.

Scores of eyes from the audience followed with intense attention her every movement and were fascinated with the serene expression on her face. All were trying to catch every word of her surprising and wonderful speech, fearing they would lose the sound of her flowing, velvety voice. All forgot where they were, what they were there for, and why they were there. All their attention was fixed on her, who, inspired by her devotion, was able to express so truthfully what was in their hearts.

The young woman, feeling her spiritual unity with the audience, continued to speak with even greater fervor about the life of Christ, of his death and resurrection. Then she looked at the lecturer from the Central Committee Headquarters, who was standing at one side of the desk and nervously manipulating his briefcase, unable to stop the young woman from continuing her speech.

The woman continued, “You deny God and wish to take our faith from us. You can do this only because you have the power. But remember, neither denial, nor prohibition, nor martyrdom killed the faith of the first Christians. Now, the people are again going to the catacombs. Once more the people will suffer, but you cannot kill their faith. You can only compel us by force to be silent about God—but remember that the everlasting judgment will require you to answer for this.”

Finally, she raised her voice and concluded her speech with these words, "You would want us to maim the children's souls. No! In the name of Almighty God, we cannot do this!" Then with dignity she left the rostrum to resume her seat. And, as she calmly walked, the sunrays lighted up her golden hair. All eyes and thoughts of the teachers were turned toward her, toward that young Russian woman who dared to speak the truth.

It was impossible to subdue the excitement that took over the teachers after her speech. Everyone began to move in the hall. Everybody tried to get near her, to shake her hand, to embrace or kiss her, and to say a kind and warm word to her.

The lecturer hovered for a while uncertainly near the rostrum and then grabbed his briefcase and cap and, unnoticed by the audience, hastily crossed the big hall and disappeared behind the wide doors.

That night was stormy, with wind of almost hurricane force. The tearing and uprooting gale bent the age-old trees to the ground and dashed great streams of rain against the windows, tore off the roofs and signboards, and blew down fences. In the darkness of the old school building, there were strange, wild noises. They sounded along the endless halls and in the empty classrooms. The sounds of water pouring down and the fury of the wind were interjected by loud noises—something groaned, something cracked, crashed, and loudly broke up into the smallest pieces; something banged, roared, and bellowed like an infuriated beast. And suddenly, amidst the maddening chaos of sounds and movements, the lightning flashed through the pitch darkness in sharp zigzags, splitting the obscurity of the night, and then a deafening peal of thunder followed, shaking the ground, drowning the noise of the wild storm and, with a loud rumbling echo, rolled away into the night...

In the morning, the departing teachers learned that the courageous woman had disappeared from her room. Reliable rumors reached their ears that, on that frightful stormy night, the agents of the Lugansk CheKa arrested and shot that unknown Russian woman—wife, mother, teacher, and devoted Christian—who dared to stand up boldly and to speak in the name of the Great Truth.

With this depressing news, the teachers—carrying fully loaded suitcases containing as much as possible of the handmade items

and bringing home benches and buckets made during their workshops—departed to their places of employment. They were ready to start the new school year to teach with the new methods that they had learned. They didn't anticipate the numerous difficulties that awaited them in implementing these methods. Their schools didn't have the workshops, nor did they have the tools, laboratories, or the means to equip them. The nearby factories and plants were either in ruins and disrepair after the civil war, neglect, and pilferage, or were in such deplorable condition that they could not serve as places for teaching students vocational skills.

After many experiments, the schools went back to the traditional methods of the old pre-revolutionary schools, although new textbooks were full of revolutionary and anti-religious text and slogans. And many disappointed teachers left the schools.

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1. *Otdel Narodnogo Obrazovaniya*—Department of People's Education.
 2. A degrading cliché used during and after the revolution for anyone who didn't belong to the laboring class.
 3. A meritorious cliché used during and after the revolution for anyone who did belong to the laboring class.



The Courtship and Marriage

As Remembered by Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky

In the summer of 1921, at the end of the school year, the teachers with whom I shared the apartment decided to move from Nikitovka.¹ Irina Victorovna Adler returned to her native Latvia, and Zinayda Petrovna Polyevoy returned with her daughter to her birthplace in Crimea. At the same time, in addition to teaching Russian, I was offered a part-time position as a secretary by the Railroad School Committee and received permission to live temporarily in the school office.

The school office was a big room divided by two wide bookcases. Near the entrance door stood two desks—one for the school office clerk and the other for the secretary. Behind the bookcases was enough space for my bed. To heat the office there was a small cast iron stove on which I also cooked my meals. My students supplied me with some foodstuff, not much, but I had some variety compared to many others at that time.

Many of my former students from gymnasium were now grown, and some of the boys who had been fighting in the civil war were returning home. When somebody told me that Orest Gladky had returned, I didn't even remember how he looked. I had him as a student before he volunteered with his friends in the White Army.² All I remembered about his general appearance was that he was a skinny boy with dark hair and brown eyes, and that as a student he didn't do exceptionally well in my French class. From the time he returned to Nikitovka, he attended a few evening gatherings with some of my friends. They told me that once someone was talking about me, and Orest stated that he didn't like me. During the summer he was hired as a school office clerk, and there we were, by chance, working together.

During the two years that he was away, he had changed a lot from the time I remembered him as my student. He had left home as a youth and returned from the civil war a grown-up young man. I knew his mother well and respected her as a teacher and a

fine woman. I also liked his father, who was involved with the choir and the concerts benefiting the cultural life of the community.

Now that we were working side by side in the school office, we had enough time during the day to talk and to find out many things about each other. He was very cautious—understandably it was politically dangerous—and didn't talk at all about being a volunteer in the White Army. But among some of the things to talk about in those days was the scarcity of food. Orest complained to me many times that in his home all they had to eat was boiled millet seeds, which they received with the coupons from the railroad cooperative, forty pounds a month for all four of them. And that was the only food they had to eat, as he repeated many times, "Boiled millet for breakfast, boiled millet for lunch, and boiled millet for supper—every day, day after day. We all are fed up with it!"

He was so pathetic in expressing his hate of millet that he aroused my sympathy, and one day I asked him to stay after work and share my special meal, fried potatoes. Well, this started our friendship. He got used to staying after work and eating with me. Then, after the meal, we began to go out for a walk on the railroad tracks, and after a while we found out that we liked each other, and we fell in love. Soon we were talking about getting married.

Mikhail Makarovich, Orest's father, came by the school office several times to visit with us. Then Orest told me I was invited for a boiled millet dinner at his home. At the table Orest mentioned our plans to get married, to which his older sister, Anya, promptly and proudly replied that I was "not right" for her brother, that I was "eight years older" than he was. She was ready to enumerate other reasons, but her father stopped her comments right there and told her, "It is not your business to decide whom your brother is going to marry."

On February 23, 1922, the day of my birthday, we got married by registering at SAGS.³ Marriage in the church was out of the question—I could lose my work as a teacher immediately. However, when nobody could see us we sneaked in the church, crossed ourselves, and said a prayer. Shortly after, by the order of the Commissar Orekhov, the church was closed and was converted into a movie theater.

After we got married, we lived in the school office behind the

bookcases in my living space and slept on my small single bed. One night I woke up from a strange rustle, “Sh-sh-sh-sh...” I turned on the light. All the walls were covered with black cockroaches. Probably the smell of food I was cooking in the office had attracted them from the neighboring houses, where the food was scarce. We slept the rest of the night on the other side of the bookcases on the office desks. In the morning, all the cockroaches had disappeared. Soon after that incident we found a small apartment across the street from the school.

My students supplied me generously with onions, which I used in every meal to add taste. One day I was busy correcting students’ papers and cooking at the same time. I burned the coarsely cut onions that I was frying with a small amount of sunflower seed oil as a condiment for the soup, which was simply water, crushed potatoes, and salt. I could not afford to throw the onions away—those were all that I had. The burned onion flakes swimming in my soup resembled the cockroaches and reminded us about their nocturnal invasion only a short time before. Orest laughingly called it a “cockroach soup,” and we could never forget it.

As a school clerk, Orest had to travel to *Uchprofsorg Zhelezných Dorog*⁴ in Slavyansk to certify school documents and to receive a huge bag with new money for teachers’ salaries. Money at that time was really not worth the paper on which it was printed. The bills were called the *Sovznaky*⁵. The new money was printed in Leningrad in large denominations of thousands—ten thousand, hundred thousand, and millions. The prices skyrocketed by the hours. At one time the price of a cup of coffee was as much as one million *Sovznaks*.

Although the hustle and bustle of everyday life was a constant factor in our lives, for me and for my husband this was also a time of tender, youthful joys of love. Remembering those happy days many years after, I wrote a short poem.⁶

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1. See the chapters: “Starting out in Life,” “Ukrainian Folk Dance Hopak,” and “Polytechnization.”
 2. See the chapters “White Army Volunteers,” and “Home at Last.”
 3. SAGS—acronym for *Otdel Sapisy Aktov Grazhdanskogo Sostoyaniya*—

The Civil Registrar Office.

4. Uchprofsorg Zhelezných Dorog—acronym for Uchastkovy Professionalny Soyuz Rabochikh Gosudarstvennykh Zhelezných Dorog—The District Office of Professional Union of the State's Railroads Workers.
5. *Sovyet'skiye Znaky*—name of the Soviet paper money at that time.
6. See the poem "I Was in Love."



I Was in Love

By Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky

I was in love in the spring
When the lilac trees were flowering
And the whole garden was in bloom.
In the sultry summer
My love was in full flame.
In the golden autumn
I had my wedding
Under multi-colored trees.
In the snow-white winter
I tenderly caressed
My spouse desirable.



It's Time to Go!

By Orest M. Gladky

In the early spring of 1922, militiamen became visible on the streets of Nikitovka. By pure chance, I found out very soon that they were bringing summonses for people to present themselves in the CheKa's office. It happened one day when I was passing near the house of my friend Ivan Dekan and stopped on the sidewalk to talk with him. Ivan was one year older than I, but he served also as a volunteer in the White Army. A very young militiaman stopped uncertainly near Ivan's house and, checking on the list in his hands, asked politely, "Do you know if comrade Dekan lives here?"

"That's me," answered Ivan with apprehension.

"Here!" The young militiaman handed him the paper, changing his voice to convey an order: "You have a summons to appear tomorrow in the local CheKa's office. And be sure to be there on time!" he warned.

Trying to speak jokingly, I asked the militiaman, "I am his friend. My name is Orest Gladky; is my name also there on the list?"

The politically inexperienced young militiaman carefully checked on the piece of paper and said, "Yes, your name is here, too. We will be delivering summonses on your street later this week."

"A-a-a..." I nodded. Then, looking at my friend, I said, "See you soon, Ivan. I have to hurry home."

"I understand," he confirmed with a nod, as if he wanted to say, "Maybe you still have time to sneak out from their claws."

I returned home immediately. There was no time for waiting, possibly to be arrested tomorrow. As I entered the room, I simply stated to my wife, Tonya, "It's time to go!" She looked at me with surprise, and I explained to her what I had found out from the young, simple-minded militiaman.

Tonya agreed with me that there was no time to waste.

We quickly collected the few possessions we had and rushed to the station, stopping only at the telegraph office to tell my father that we were leaving for Yusovka. We decided that in a big town it was easier to disappear into the crowd. We did not need to buy tickets because, as employees of the railroad school, we had permanent passes for free travel to all local destinations. We departed on the first train that was going in that direction.

The first place to stay that came to our minds was the only address in Yuzovka we had for Lev Mironovich Tatarsky, a young man who had been courting Tonya's older sister, Tanya. He met her when she was on an internship as a dentist in Yuzovka's mill hospital.

When we arrived in the town of Yuzovka, Tanya was in Slavyansk to make arrangements in the village of Nikolskoye. Therefore, we felt that we were almost related to Lyeva and stopped to see him. He had a large apartment, and we asked him if he could accommodate us for a few days until we could find a place to live. He said that we could stay as long as we needed in his room, because the next day he was joining Tanya in Slavyansk and would not return for a couple of weeks.

Lyeva shared the apartment with several other young men. We stayed in his room for more than a week and had to share the kitchen and bathroom with Lyeva's young men companions. These young men behaved very strangely. I warned Tonya not to go out of our room when she could hear them in the hall, because I saw them running naked in the apartment and horsing around very noisily with each other in their rooms. She couldn't understand why they behaved this way, but I was reluctant to explain to her that they were homosexuals. Only later, she found out that it was a deviant behavior about which she, who grew up in a sheltered environment, had never heard anything.

After their marriage Lyeva and Tanya found another apartment and settled in Yuzovka. Right from the first months we understood that Tanya was not very happy. She complained that Lyeva was spending a lot of his time in his old apartment in the company of his boyfriends. But she decided to give him some time to get used to being married.

When the bride and groom came to Yusovka, we had already found a small apartment on Eleventh Lane. It was not far from the place where Tonya found temporary employment as a secretary

in the newly opened Technical School of Mining. In the fall of 1922, in the same building was opened Rabfak,¹ a new type of secondary school for adult workers, and Tonya was hired there to teach Russian language and literature. Meanwhile I found a job as a clerk in one of the town's government offices, but I made a major mistake by giving as a reference that I belonged to the railroad union—it led directly to Nikitovka. As soon as the political purge of the town's employees got started, I decided not to wait my turn to be investigated. I came home and said to Tonya, "It's time to go!"

But Tonya—who was working temporarily as a secretary during the summer for the rector of the Technical School and the Rabfak professor Mukhachev—suggested asking him if he could arrange for me to attend Technical School of Mining without submitting a worker's certificate from the factory or coal mine. Professor Mukhachev arranged it, and I was accepted at the first-year course for that school year. Only later we found out why Mukhachev was so generous and benevolent with us.

1. Rabfak—acronym for *Rabochy Fakul'tyet*—Workers' Faculty School.



The Town of Yuzovka

By Antonina G. Gladky

Before the revolution, the town of Yuzovka was a large industrial center located in the middle of the Donetsk Basin.¹ Surrounding the town were numerous coal mines producing one of the highest and most prestigious grades of coal—anthracite. The black peaks of the *terrycons*² surrounding the coal mines, like colossal sentinels, could be seen disappearing on the horizon in many directions from the town. On the town's outskirts there was a large steel mill with a small hamlet and its own clinic that was built before the revolution.

During the day, a cloud of coal dust from the mines hung over the town, and, in the evening, it was illuminated by the dark-red glow from the steel mill. Straight streets, running from the steel mill into and through the town, did not have names; instead they were numbered and were called lanes.

First Lane stretched through the center of the town. There, in the center, was the cathedral, encircled by the square, the market place, and a great number of stores, shops, and little shops. It was there that the pulse of the town's life and that of neighboring hamlets was located. In the past, Yuzovka was not only an industrial but also a commercial center with a large number of Jewish merchants having a successful and brisk trade. There the peasants from the neighboring villages brought their produce to the market and the workers and employees from the surrounding coal-mines hamlets came to shop.

Although I lived in Yuzovka only two years, I have both very fond and very sad memories about the town. After escaping from their family home, my parents lived there. There, during the typhoid epidemic raging after the revolution, my mother and my younger sister Olga died, never fulfilling their dreams to return home.³ There, on January 1, 1923 (by the old-style calendar) my daughter was born. I named her Olga in memory of my dear sister. There, I started teaching adults, men and women workers,

and this influenced the direction of my lifelong career in adult education.

During the revolution and civil war, commercial and industrial activity in town came to a standstill. Only at the beginning of 1921, when the government introduced the New Economic Policy, called NEP, that allowed limited private commerce, life in Yuzovka was rejuvenated by free commerce. Many private stores and shops were opened, and on the open market, the number of the small, petty traders grew rapidly, like mushrooms overnight. Suddenly, all kinds of products appeared in abundance, and the prices began to fall. The peasants were bringing their produce to the markets because they finally could find and purchase the products they needed for themselves.

In 1920, when the Soviet government began a general rebuilding of the industry ravaged by the revolution and civil war, priority was given to restoring the railways and the coal-mining industry. At the same time, by an infusion of funds, the government began to develop and promote a wide variety of educational programs for adult workers. Short-term courses and special schools for adults were opened in all industrial centers. These schools were intended to prepare the new specialists, and lower, middle and upper level managers, as well as the new leaders for mining, industry, and agriculture; in short, the new intelligentsia. The Soviet government did not trust the old intelligentsia—the pre-revolutionary engineers, technicians, and managers from the old Russia—who were considered to be the bourgeois class. Socialist doctrine advocated that only the people of proletarian and poor peasant origin could build the new socialist society. All these changes were expected to improve economic conditions for the miners and the rest of the population in the Donetsk region and in the town of Yuzovka.

In 1921, on First Lane in Yuzovka, in the building of a former School of Commerce, a new Technical School of Mining was opened; in 1922, in the same building, a Rabfak was opened. Rabfak was a new type of secondary school for adult workers. The objective of these schools was to prepare specialists and leaders for mining and industry. During four years of study at the Rabfak, students were to receive a general secondary school education and to be prepared for entrance into higher education institutions.

Tuition for the qualified students was free. In addition, they received a small monthly stipend, clothing, and free school dormitories or rent allowance for those who could not be housed by the school. A cafeteria and a barbershop were also located in the school building. The teachers at the Rabfak were well provided for; they received a good salary and food provisions.

In July 1922, I was able to find a position as a teacher of Russian language and literature at the Rabfak. At that time the principal of the Technical School of Mining and of the Rabfak was comrade Pughach, and the rector was Professor Mukhachev, a former professor at the Kharkov's Technological Institute. For the two months that remained until the beginning of the new school year, Professor Mukhachev appointed me temporarily as a secretary at the Rabfak office. I was involved with the formal registration of students and the required documentation of their eligibility for acceptance to the Rabfak, which were rather strict.

The men and women workers had to be between eighteen and thirty-five years old; they also had to present documents certifying that they had been working for at least three years. In addition, they had to be selected and recommended by the Bolshevik party and trade union committees at their coal mines, factories, or plants. Also, the students had to pass an entrance examination to establish their basic knowledge and, finally, to be screened by the Rabfak's selection committee. For many workers Rabfak was not only a chance to receive a free education, but also an opportunity for future promotions at their jobs and in the Bolshevik party hierarchy.

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1. Coal basin in eastern Ukraine located near the River Donets, a tributary of the River Don.
 2. The high, cone-shaped waste heaps formed from the black rock discarded from the mines.
 3. See the chapter "Tragic Refuge."



A Rabfak Student Nikita Khrushchev

By Antonina G. Gladky

It was the first of September, 1922, the beginning of the school year at the Rabfak.¹ About three hundred workers and coal miners were ready to take their places at the desks and to try their abilities to learn after being out of elementary school for many years.

Excitement reigned in the teachers' room. The teachers were getting acquainted with each other; they were sharing their ideas about the forthcoming and unusual task of teaching adults. Selection of the teachers was very good; all the best teachers from the town of Yuzovka were teaching at the Rabfak. I still remember most of them: the chemistry teacher Mikhail Mikhailovich Platonov, who had completed his education abroad; cheerful and bubbling with life Olshanchenko, a geography teacher, who had traveled all over Russia and had been abroad before the revolution; very cautious and prudent teacher of history, Chetyrkina, who got her education at the famous Besstuzhevsky Courses; the well-known Goryainov, a teacher of Russian literature; the two young teachers of mathematics, Zolotareva and Abramov, who were always so busy solving mathematical problems that they didn't have time to exchange words with the other teachers in the teachers' room.

Then there was a Bolshevik Zablodsky, the only one whom everybody was calling *tovarishch*,² because all other teachers were called by their first name followed by their patronymic³ name. Comrade Zablodsky was teaching political education at the Rabfak and, according to the students, was following word for word the textbook "The Alphabet of Communism" by G. Zinovjev.⁴ At the same time he was also a student at the Technical School of Mining, located in the same building as the Rabfak.

The bell called for the beginning of lessons, and the teachers

left for their classrooms. Everybody was keeping in mind not to forget the new greeting: "Comrades students!"

I entered the classroom of First Course A. Thirty-five students were sitting in front of me, two at each desk. After I finished taking the attendance and made my acquaintance with each student, I started to introduce them to the content and a plan of work in my Russian-language course.

At that moment, a new student entered the classroom. His appearance wasn't different from the others in any specific way. He was slender, of average height, and was wearing an old jacket over a workman's shirt, a pair of trousers stuffed into boots that were covered with coal dust, and he wore a visored cap, which he didn't remove entering the room. I asked his name.

"Nikita Khrushchev," he answered. Some students looked at him, as though they had heard this name before.

"I don't have you on my list," I told him after checking in my register and not finding his name.

"I have been accepted just now as a student," he answered. "Here is a note from Principal Pughach."



Nikita Khrushchev, Yusovka, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, ca 1923–1924.

Photo Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

And he handed to me a small slip on which I read: “Nikita Khrushchev. Date of birth: April 17, 1894. Accepted at the First Course A.”

“All right, Comrade Khrushchev, please sit down,” I invited him, showing an empty place on one of the desks.

During my two years of teaching at the Rabfak, I spent more time with Nikita Khrushchev than with any other student. His knowledge of Russian grammar at that time was very limited, and he was attending supplementary tutoring sessions with some other students.

It needs to be said that teaching adult students at the Rabfak required the teacher to be very tactful and capable of helping the students, who must learn without losing their self-esteem.

First, it was necessary to take into account the feelings of adult

workers and try to spare their pride. Some of them were ashamed to show that although they knew the rudiments of reading and writing, they were novices to a more or lesser degree with Russian grammar and correct spelling. They had difficulty separating Russian and Ukrainian words and expressions, which were very commonly intermixed in the popular spoken language in that region.

And second, it was necessary to select the most effective methods of teaching, so that in four years the students could learn as much as in the usual programs of study that required six to eight years.

In addition, the teachers had to be very careful in the selection of teaching materials and in the expression of their ideas. Most students were members of the Bolshevik party, which had already taught them revolutionary vigilance and their duty of recognizing and reporting to the authorities the names of those individuals who, according to their opinion, used subtle ways to introduce anti-communist sentiments and points of view.

Some of the students who had to attend tutoring sessions were very impatient and did not want to recognize their poor knowledge of the Russian language, or any other subject in which they needed tutoring. They argued with the teachers and tried to justify themselves by accusing the teacher of nagging them and giving them a poor grade unjustly. They felt that being members of the Bolshevik party gave them the right to apply pressure on the teachers to promote them, regardless of their poor performance in the subject.

Khrushchev attended the tutoring sessions regularly. From the beginning I was able to establish a good rapport with him. He was modest and patient, and somewhat embarrassed by his inadequacy in elementary practical skills. It was apparent that he hadn't had much practice lately with pencils, pens, notebooks, and books. His rough fingers and a short, wide hand hindered his writing skills. He had to be shown how to hold the pencil the right way. At first, he had a hard time holding the pencil steady—it was slipping out of his fingers—but little by little, and with a lot of patience, he mastered the task. I had to do it in such a way that he would not perceive that I was showing him an elementary task, but rather was teaching him a more efficient way of performing, which he accepted as a practical suggestion.

Nikita Khrushchev was very patient and serious about completing his homework, but at the same time, he was puzzled and expressed his skepticism about the need for some exercises. I remember that one time he asked me, "Is it so very important to be able to write letters neatly?"

"Yes, very important," I explained. "In the first place, this shows that one is a literate person; and in the second place, you should remember that in any work, the master is appreciated by the quality of his work." At such remarks, he only nodded in a sign of his agreement.

Grammar was hard for him to learn. He had difficulty with declinations of nouns and with finding subject and predicate in the sentences. When he was having a hard time solving these tasks, his face would suddenly become hot red; he would remove his cap and wipe his sweaty forehead. But, like a child, he truly enjoyed every small success in learning the new tasks. I still remember well his smiling, happy face when he was able to find the correct ending for a noun, or to construct a logical sentence.

Seeing my sincere desire to help him learn and knowing that he depended on my knowledge of the language to improve himself, he treated me with respect and allowed me to guide him. He was ready to compromise when he could grasp the reason for mastering some of the grammatical rules. Then he yielded to the necessary requirements and used to say with amazement, "Well, well, what kind of intricate thing this grammar is!"

For spelling practice, I used to ask my students to write from my dictation or to re-tell in writing some of the short stories that they had read. Spelling was one of the hardest tasks for Nikita Khrushchev, even when he was already in his second year at the Rabfak.

The Russian language program included readings from the masters of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian literature from a newly printed reading book that contained passages from works of Pushkin, Lermontov, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Gogol, Turgenev, and others. The works of these writers reflected the feudal period of Russian history. However, the reading materials were carefully selected and politically oriented to emphasize the injustices that existed in the past—the hard and oppressed situation of the peasants, the yoke of serfdom, and the revolts by the serfs, all the events that were addressed and

corrected by the Agrarian Reform⁵ of 1861.

Some of the shorter novels were assigned to the students to read by themselves outside of class, and then they were discussed during the lessons. They had to learn some of the verses by heart and recite from memory. What I wanted most was to show my students the beauty of the Russian language found in the samples of Russian classical writers, and to instill in them enthusiasm for reading. I would like to believe that Nikita Khrushchev never forgot the verse “To Chadayev,” and the passages from the verse “The Village” by Pushkin.

Nikita Khrushchev enjoyed the reading lessons. He was very attentive in following the plot of the stories and quickly sided himself either with one of the characters, or with one group of people, and felt strongly against some of the others. This was so obvious when he actively participated in the discussions that followed afterward.

He was very sensitive and took to heart the events from the long-gone past. He considered the landlords, capitalists, and bourgeoisie as one single concept—the rich people. He believed that they were the cause of all social injustice as distinguished from poor or working people—with whom he identified himself—who had to endure hardships and oppression. He used to attack those characters in the story he considered to be unjust to the poor and to sympathize with those who had to bear the burden of poverty or injustice.

He liked to talk, and sometimes it seemed as if he finally had the chance to express his opinion after long years of silence imposed on him by something or by somebody. Listening to his lengthy statements, I was wondering where and when he had learned some of those cumbersome words in his vocabulary and if he comprehended their full meaning. Then I remembered all those endless meetings held during the revolution.⁶ Meetings, in one form or another, were still going on very intensively everywhere. They were used as a tool for indoctrination with communist principles and ideas. And everything became clear—for many of my students and for Nikita Khrushchev, the revolutionary meetings had been their first real school, and the Bolshevik speakers had been their first teachers. It was from them that he learned the tricks of revolutionary speech, with its confusing verbosity mixed with standardized slogans that were

for him a real detriment to logical expression. And, because he often was short of words to convey his message, he compensated for this by using energetic gestures to express himself.

Another factor that also greatly interfered with his ability to master the correct written and spoken Russian was his assimilation of the speech patterns used by miners and the characteristic language of the Donbas region, which was a mixture of southern Russian and southeastern Ukrainian folk dialects.

However, this influence of ordinary folk speech was also one of the enriching sources in his repertoire, of ever-ready references for all occasions in the form of time-honored popular proverbs and sayings.

I remember one particular episode, which happened during the time when we were reading and discussing the novel "Captain's Daughter" by Pushkin, and the impression the hero of the story, Yemelyan Pugachev, made on Nikita Khrushchev. This novel presents a vivid picture of the spontaneous peasants' revolt in the Urals⁷ in 1773. The story tells of a fugitive Donskoy Cossack,⁸ Yemelyan Pugachev, who suddenly appears in the Urals. Clever and daring by nature, he used the discontent of the Urals Cossacks with the local authorities and in a clever move becomes the leader of the revolt. He proclaimed himself to be the Tsar Peter the Third and leads the Cossacks, peasants, and the poor members of the population to conquer one fortress after another. Nikita Khrushchev's comment showed his admiration for the hero: "He was a cunning muzhik, wasn't he? And how quick-witted he was in his moves! He outsmarted them all!"

At that time his reaction impressed me, but I did not attach a great deal of importance to his words and why he was taking it so passionately. But contemplating now with hindsight, I believe that Nikita Khrushchev was fascinated with Pugachev's courage and boldness, and probably this illiterate but daring Cossack had become one of his favorite heroes who inspired him in his pursuit of power. And as peculiar as it may appear, Khrushchev's speech patterns had some similarities with those of Pugachev, including a prolific use of folk proverbs and sayings.

The Fall semester was ending, and many students whose families were in other towns were leaving home for the New Year celebration.

It was New Year's Eve of 1922 by the old-style calendar, which was still used by the people to commemorate old holidays, I felt that the time was near for my baby to be born. Orest and my sister Tanya found a coachman with a sleigh and took me to a hospital. The hospital was so crowded that they put me on a bed in a long hall, and I waited there the whole night.¹

In the early hours of the morning, on the fourteenth of January, 1923, by the new calendar, or on the first of January by the old calendar, I had my New Year's daughter. I named her Olga, like my beloved sister whom I lost recently in that town.² Orest's sister Vera came to stay with us for a few months and helped me with my newborn daughter. Our apartment was almost directly across the street from the Rabfak, and I nursed my daughter during the breaks between the classes. Later our neighbor's wife baby-sat for us.

Being a teacher at the Rabfak, I hesitated to bring my daughter to the church for christening for fear it would jeopardize my employment. I was the breadwinner in the family—my husband was a student at the Miners Technical School—therefore, I was afraid to lose my teaching position and shared this feeling with my sister Tanya. One day when I was at school, Tanya and Lyeva, without my knowledge, took my daughter to the church and baptized her, declaring them to be the godmother and the godfather. When my father received this news, he did let us know that he was happy that his granddaughter was baptized according to the Russian Orthodox tradition and would be protected by the Almighty.

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1. *Rabochiy Facultyet*—a preparatory school for adult workers equivalent to middle school.
 2. Comrade.
 3. Name derived from the father's first name, used in Russia and in some other Slavic countries.
 4. One of the leaders of the Bolshevik faction.
 5. See the chapter "The Origins of the Berezhnoy Family."
 6. See the chapter "In Whose Name?"
 7. The region of the Ural Mountains that starts from the Arctic Ocean and ranges southerly and divides Russia into two parts belonging to

the European and the Asiatic continents.

8. Cossack from the Don region, located along the river Don.



Khrushchev as a Political Figure at Rabfak

By Antonina G. Gladky

The social and political activities of Khrushchev at the Rabfak became noticeable after one very unusual event for those times in the life of the students. One day in the spring of 1923, the students were not satisfied with some action of Principal Pugach. Probably it was in connection with the irregular payments of stipends that were happening very often. Nikita Khrushchev had taken the initiative in his hands and immediately gathered the students for a meeting at which he addressed them, reinforcing his words with menacing gesticulations.

He harshly criticized the unfair conduct of the principal and proposed to organize a mass demonstration to protest against this injustice to the students. He incited them to march to the Town Communist Party Committee Headquarters and to demand a resolution of the problem. At this point, the meeting started to thin out. Many of the students were leaving the meeting because they were afraid of risking their free education if the protest turned out to be unsuccessful.

By introducing such ideas, Khrushchev was showing his political naiveté. Already at that time, the Bolsheviks considered demonstrations of this kind unlawful. The Soviet power was supposed to have given happiness and justice to the working people, having liberated them from the capitalistic yoke and injustice. What kind of unhappiness or injustice could there be to protest now?

Not being aware that he was using the rights and methods of workers in capitalist countries, Khrushchev, with the red flag in his hands, was leading the demonstration. A small group of students followed him. Marching on First Lane, on its way to the Headquarters of the Town's Communist Party Committee, the "mighty" demonstration lost a few followers who had stepped

aside to the sidewalk. But this didn't stop the leader, who proudly marched ahead of his followers. As it became known later, Khrushchev achieved his objective. But the most amazing thing of all was that, after such a risky undertaking, Khrushchev gained strong popularity among students.

At the Rabfak all called him simply Nikita. I could not tell exactly what kind of political position he held or what type of students' political activities he was involved in after this happened. But it became obvious that he was occupied with something important and was often absent from classes; I began to see him only occasionally, during my tutoring sessions.

I noticed that his appearance had also changed. Now, he was wearing a leather jacket and a cap. His smiling face had assumed a serious expression. His bearing became self-confident; he was walking now with his head up, his shoulders straight, giving a general impression of being a very busy man.

In the beginning of the school year 1924–1925, there were significant changes at the Rabfak. Professor Mukhachev, the rector of the Technical School and the Rabfak, did not return to his position that fall. Later it became known that he suddenly disappeared during the summer, and the rumors were that he was a monarchist and a member of a monarchic organization called the Union of the Russian People.

In his place Nikolay Nikolayevich Rozhdestvensky was appointed. The new rector was of middle age, a tall and energetic man, who, notwithstanding being lame due to an injured leg, was very agile, swift, and active. Right away he issued an order to all teachers to show him their educational credentials and a statement of their principles in teaching their subject matter. He also began an intensive supervision of the teachers by making regular classroom observations, by maintaining a systematic control of their lesson plans, and by conducting frequent conversations with them.

After being used to the good-natured professor Mukhachev, the teachers considered him to be a bureaucrat and a careerist. But most important, he was a zealous Communist and a loyal member of the Bolshevik faction of the party.

Very soon the teachers felt uneasy under his supervision. At the same time, the atmosphere of distrust and revolutionary vigilance on the part of the Bolshevik party organization began to

reign in our institution. Teachers and students, finding themselves under constant control, were nervous from being on the alert all the time. Any imprudent step in their teaching, any inopportune word said inadvertently, could have led to dismissal from the institution or even to the very serious consequences of being arrested by the GPU.

I remember an incident that happened to me after the lesson in which I explained to my students the use of “neither–nor” as a negative with the verb. I took the following example from a well-known poem by Pushkin: “The bird of God knows neither worry, nor work...” This example played a very important role in my future teaching at the Rabfak. Shortly after the lesson was over, I was summoned to the rector’s office for an inquiry about it.

As soon as I came in his office, Rozhdestvensky asked me, “Why have you used such a preposterous and unfortunate example in your lesson?” I looked at him, shaking my head, and made a gesture with my hands conveying that I didn’t understand what he meant. “The bird of God!” he clarified impatiently.

“Nikolay Nikolayevich, you are insulting the name of the great Russian poet, Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin,” I answered with a voice defending my choice. “This example is taken from his poem ‘The Bird of Passage.’”

“Yes, yes... but the bird is the ‘bird of God’... this sounds like an old, outlived notion!” He remarked, making a contemptuous grimace and shaking his head.

“The poetry of Pushkin was, is, and will always be everlasting.” I insisted.

It was not difficult to conclude that one of my students had shown his revolutionary vigilance by reporting me immediately after the lesson was over. But who was the one?

Soon after this incident, the rumors about a forthcoming purge began to circulate at the Rabfak. The teachers were requested to submit their autobiographies. Comrade Byelostotsky, a chairman of the teachers’ union, or as it was called at that time, The Regional Union of School Workers, became a frequent visitor to the teachers’ room. The teachers felt that he was there spying on their conversations and refrained from friendly exchanges of opinions. The atmosphere became cold and restrained.

Meanwhile, my husband became a target of the not-too-subtle

attention of the political vigilance at the Miners Technical School after one of the required lessons in military training. One day during practice in the use of guns, his instructor noticed that while the other students were confused about how to lie on the ground and how to hold a gun, Orest did everything right. He became suspicious and began to ask him where he learned to use a gun, what was his background, where he came from... That did it! Orest came home that evening and said, "It's time to go!"¹

He didn't wait for an official inquiry and dropped out of the Technical School under the excuse that after the birth of the baby² he needed to start working to supplement his wife's income. While he applied and was waiting for a full-time teaching position in some of the schools in the region, he found temporary employment in the office of *Oblnarobras*³ as it was called the Regional Department of People's Education. Soon there was a vacancy for a teacher in an orphanage in the nearby town of Makeyevka. Orest decided to accept it, and I remained at the Rabfak. Orest's sister Vera came to live with me for a while to help me with my baby daughter.

But Comrade Rozhdestvensky was thorough in his search for undesirable elements among the teachers. From the autobiography that I submitted, he knew that my hometown was Slavyansk. He inquired about my father's background and found out that my father was a *lishenets*.⁴ My father's political "crimes" were being a former owner of two homes and having his own tailor shop where he allegedly "exploited" the master and the apprentices who worked for him.

After this, some of my classes were assigned to another teacher of Russian, Byelostotsky. I understood that I had become a target of the vigilant Bolshevik party members and decided that the wisest thing was for me to look for a position in some other place. When my husband came to visit me on his day off, we agreed, "It's time to go!"

It was almost the end of the school year, and I had submitted my resignation from the Rabfak. As I walked out of the office holding a certificate of my teaching record at the Rabfak, I encountered Nikita Khrushchev in the hall and told him that I had resigned. At parting I told him, "Good-bye, Comrade Khrushchev! Who knows, maybe someday we will see each other again."

“Why not? Only the mountains cannot move, but persons may always meet each other,” he answered with a proverb, avoiding looking directly in my eyes.

I had the impression that he probably already knew the reason for my resignation.

In the summer of 1924, my husband and I found employment in the village of Nizhnyaya Krynka, and we moved there.⁵

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1. See the chapter “It’s Time to Go!”
 2. The birth of our daughter Olga.
 3. *Oblastnoy Otdel Narodnogo Obrazovaniya*.
 4. A person deprived of civil rights to vote in elections because of his/her undesirable political background.
 5. See the chapter “The Village School.”



PART FIVE

Stalin's Dictatorship



Ukrainization of Schools

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky and Orest M. Gladky

The Soviet Union was administratively subdivided into geographical national Soviet Socialist Republics because the Communist regime needed to placate the nationalistic aspirations of the peoples of many nationalities who lived in different regions of the former Russia. Therefore, it cleverly introduced the new principle, the so-called “nationalization,” that was supposed to give the impression of national autonomy to each Soviet Republic. So, each republic received an order from Moscow to implement this “nationalization.” In practice it meant the legalization of the official use of the national language within the geographical national administrative borders of each Soviet Republic.

Although the official language of the Soviet Union remained Russian, as it was in Russia before the revolution, the official language in each of the Soviet republics was declared to be its national language. And all the official documents had to be written in two parts, one in the national language of the republic, and the other in Russian. Therefore, the Ukrainian language became the official language of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

This change was also applied to the educational system, beginning the new trend of the “nationalization” of schools. Each Soviet republic had to have two types of schools: one type where all subjects were taught in the national language of the republic with the Russian language as a required subject, and the second type where all subjects were taught in Russian with the national language as a required subject. Parents had the choice of which type of school to send their children.

Therefore, in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic the implementation of this new educational system, called the “Ukrainization” of schools, began. The People’s Education Offices desperately searched for qualified teachers who could teach the

Ukrainian language and other subjects in Ukrainian. At that time there were no teachers who had formal schooling and educational background that qualified them for either of the two positions, but otherwise qualified teachers with practical knowledge of the Ukrainian language were considered excellent candidates. It was especially hard to find teachers who wanted to teach in the village schools.

When Tonya and I decided to leave Yuzovka,¹ I went to the Regional Office of People's Education, called Office of *Narobras*,² to inquire about available teaching positions for me and for my wife. Some sympathetic employees suggested to me that those who were qualified educationally and could more or less teach in the Ukrainian language were accepted and appointed to teaching positions immediately, without the usual delays for checking their social and political backgrounds.

Since Tonya and I wanted to leave Yuzovka as soon as possible, we decided to use this opportunity to find employment right away. We found a textbook of Ukrainian language and in a hurry studied the basics of grammar, spelling, and pronunciation, which was not so hard for us to do since we grew up and lived all our lives in the Ukraine and our fathers were of Ukrainian ancestry. Our Southern Russian accent helped us in mastering Ukrainian pronunciation quickly. We were used to hearing and speaking the Southern-Russian dialect used by the common people in the towns. Ukrainian was spoken in that region by the peasants in the villages. Then it suddenly became the new official language of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

In the fall of 1924, as soon as we finished our quick course in Ukrainian language, about a week or so before the schools were to start the new school year, we went to the Regional Office of the *Narobras* in the town of Yuzovka and told them that we could teach in the Ukrainian language. We were immediately accepted for positions in the village elementary school of Nizhnyaya Krynka. I was appointed as the principal of the school and Tonya as a teacher.

I was told that the former director of the school, Russian Cossack Trofimov, was fired from his position because he didn't want to obey the new rules and to recognize teaching in Ukrainian. Another teacher, a middle-aged Ukrainian man named Petro Grygorovich Shkurupy, was remaining as a second teacher

in the school.

I first went to the village alone to see the place.

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1. See the chapter “Khrushchev as a Political Leader at Rabfak.”
 2. Narobras—acronym for *Narodnoye Oblasovaniye*—People’s Education.



The Village School

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky and Antonina G. Gladky

Nizhnyaya Krynka was a large village located in the district of Khartsisk in the Ukraine. The peasants there worked in the fields and cultivated mostly grain; however, they also planted corn, sunflowers, millet, and potatoes. They also had vegetable gardens and cherry trees in their backyards; all of them had farm animals, and some were also keeping beehives.

Nearby was an abandoned coal mine that during the revolution was flooded with underground water, which was not pumped out in time, and now the mine was not functioning anymore. Some coal miners moved to the other mines or to the factories in towns, and some became Bolsheviks and took positions as political activists in the countryside.

The elementary village school, which was now called the Four-Year Elementary Labor School, was housed in a building that before the revolution was built as a dormitory for the miners; however there were no miners housed there now. The school was located on the corner of a large village church square, across the street from the former village church. An old village elementary school that was located across the street had been transformed into offices for the Village Soviet, called *Selsoviet*.¹

The former church had been closed recently by order of the Bolsheviks and converted to the village club, which in the abbreviated form was called *Kolbud*,² with a very funny-sounding name. It was encircled by a fancy wrought-iron fence, a sign that before the revolution the village had been a prosperous one, able to afford such an expensive decoration.

It was the period of NEP, the so-called New Economic Policy, when small private enterprise was again permitted in the towns and the farmers were allowed to work for themselves and to sell the excess of their produce on the market after paying taxes in kind to the state. Every Sunday during that period, in the village

of Nizhnyaya Krynka, farmers markets were held on the large church square, though they were not as lavish as those of the pre-revolutionary years. Suddenly private enterprise and the free, though limited, market economy made foodstuff available on the market after the lean years of revolution and civil war.

The peasants from all neighboring villages and farmsteads were bringing their products there for sale or for barter, which was a very popular form of exchange in the time of rapid currency depreciation and reluctance of the peasants to accept money for their produce. From the nearby towns, the small petty merchants were bringing their consumer merchandise for the peasants to buy. And the people from many nearby hamlets and from the neighboring towns were coming to the market to purchase or barter their used or new consumer goods for flour, grains, potatoes, sunflower oil, milk, butter, farmers' cheese, sour cream, sour milk, lard, meat, vegetables, and fruits. After the lean years of shortage of food and hunger in the country, this quick revival of commerce was almost miraculous.

The new school had four very large rooms; three of them served as the classrooms, one, as a teachers' room, but it was also used for a students' cooperative, where students could buy all the necessary items for school use, such as notebook paper, ink, pencils, pens, erasers, and whatever else was required for their lessons.

The chairman of the Selsoviet, Comrade Ofitserov, a former miner, gave me a big agricultural type cart, called *harba* in Ukrainian. It was made in the form of an inverted trapezoid with high sides, made of narrow and spaced wooden planks. The horses pulled it, of course, and I had to drive it myself. I arrived on it right up to the door of our apartment in Yuzovka. We loaded our few possessions and climbed on it. Without any hurry, we arrived the same day directly at the door of the school building in the village of Nizhnyaya Krynka.

We unloaded our belongings and placed them in one of the classrooms because the former principal, Trofimov, was still living in the teachers' room. The teacher Petro Grygorovich Shkurupy was living in the village in one room assigned to him at one of the peasants' cottages. Trofimov soon found a job in the village cooperative and vacated the teachers' room, and we settled there, waiting for Comrade Ofitserov to find us a place to

live.

We lived in the school building for a short time and then moved to a cottage next to the school. The cottage belonged to a huge muzhik with a ferocious expression on his face. The villagers gave him the nickname “The Criminal” because there were rumors that, before he moved to the village he’d lived on the farmstead, where he brutally killed his wife with a hatchet, cut her body into pieces, and made it disappear. Since during the revolution and the civil war there were many people who disappeared without a trace and nobody investigated what happened to them, his crime was never brought to justice. The rumors also said that he now was regularly “visiting” his brother’s young and pretty wife. His brother was a skinny and sickly fellow, who was afraid of his huge brother; as soon as the brother entered his cottage, he would walk out and leave the brother alone with his wife.

We lived in one half of the cottage in three rooms, and the muzhik lived in the other two rooms. Right from the beginning, we had a conflict with the owner because Tonya wanted to lock the door connecting the two parts of the cottage, and he didn’t want to give her a key. He insisted on keeping the connecting door unlocked. Of course, knowing the village rumors about him, Tonya was afraid of him, especially when she had to leave our small daughter with a peasant girl, Natasha, who came to look after her during the day. Therefore, we asked Comrade Ofitserov to find us another place to live.

Soon Comrade Ofitserov arranged for us to have the cottage of the former parish priest, who’d died shortly after the church was closed. His wife was ordered to rent a room from a widow in the village.

Our cottage was located on the opposite corner from the school, across the church square and facing the former church—the present *Kolbud*²—where all the village meetings were held. A fence encircled the cottage’s front, one side, and the back, including a courtyard and a small cherry garden, while another side of the house facing the side street was unfenced. Inside the courtyard there was a small vegetable garden and a barn.

It was a typical Ukrainian village cottage, painted white inside and outside. Holding the metal roof—not the straw thatched roof as on the other peasants’ cottages—were round wooden posts.

Those stood on the high *zavalinka*, a narrow mound of earth along the cottage's outer walls that ended on the landing of the steps leading to the entrance door of the enclosed small porch. From the porch there was a door to a small hall leading into a kitchen and into two rooms. The cottage was roomy and well lighted by many windows, and we felt very comfortable in it after living the last few years in small rooms of apartments, and without much privacy.

During the first school year, our salaries from *Rayispolkom*³ in the town of Khartsisk were so inadequate that we could not live on them. However, at that time in the village a custom remained from the pre-revolutionary years. At the beginning of the school year, the parents of the students would bring the teachers all kinds of food: flour, potatoes, millet, sunflower oil, bread, and honey. Then during the school year, students would bring the teachers bread, butter, fresh and pickled vegetables and fruits. This way we were able to live well provided with food during the first year.

In the spring the Selsoviet gave us a small lot in the fields where we planted potatoes and sunflowers for our family. When we were planting potatoes, our daughter, who was at that time about two-and-half years old, was playing "planting," and she planted our cottage keys. It took us a while to dig the place until we found them. We also planted corn in our backyard for the chicks and ducks that the hen had hatched in a big basket in the corner of our porch; after that we kept them in our barn.

That spring the school's cleaning woman brought us a small puppy. He was white with ginger spots and long fluffy fur resembling a downy ball; we named him Sharyk.⁴ He had so many fleas that we could not take him in the house. The cleaning woman suggested smearing the puppy with petroleum to kill the fleas. Since we had petroleum for our lighting, Tonya did it right away that evening. Poor Sharyk, he cried the whole night. We didn't know what to do with him. Finally, in the morning we gave him a bath and removed the petroleum and all the dead fleas with it.

Sharyk heroically withstood the torture and as a reward was allowed to stay with the hen on the porch. Next night he cuddled up near the hen, and she accepted him together with her newly hatched chicks. The only problem was that by sleeping with the

hen, he crushed three chicks.

Although Sharyk was an ordinary mongrel, he was a very smart dog and learned fast. I taught him to run around the fence every night and to bark if there was somebody in the vicinity. This came in very handy later, when his vigilance became important for our family's tranquility.

Natasha, who was watching our small daughter Lyalya in our cottage, began to steal from us; one day Tonya discovered that she had stolen her gold chain that she kept as a keepsake from her childhood. Well, we dismissed her, and Lyalya, who was then almost three years old, began coming to school with us and staying in the back row of the classroom during the lessons, sometimes with me and sometimes with her mother. She was quite happy to play with paper and pencils and to look at pictures in the books. She especially liked the art lessons, where she actively participated in drawing with colored pencils and could walk around and look at the pupils' pictures. Tonya remembered one incident that occurred during one of the art lessons in her class, when one of the boys drew a horse. In his imagination it probably looked so real to him that he suddenly screamed loudly, "Pr-r-u-ul!"⁵ as if he was trying to stop the horse from running away from him.

Another incident in school that Lyalya witnessed probably influenced her for a long time. This happened when the nurse came to our school to give inoculations against smallpox. It was pandemonium—children were crying, screaming, running away. We had to lock all the windows and doors and pull the children from the classroom one by one and hold them still so the nurse could disinfect and make a scratch on their arms. After that incident, Lyalya for a long time had a fear of doctors and nurses.

One terrible accident occurred in the village after a small circus came to the village club and the whole school attended the performance. Peasants' children had never seen anything like it before and were very impressed with the show. Among the many performers was an acrobat on a trapeze. The next morning when the parents went to work in the fields, one of the boys did not come to school but stayed home to show his younger sister how it was done. He made himself a primitive trapeze by attaching a rope with a wooden stick to the barn beam and accidentally hanged himself.

During the second year in Nizhnyaya Krynka we settled down, and our life at the school and in the village was running smoothly. We even bought a small piglet and started to raise him, hoping to have good pork meat for the next year. One day in the spring, after having raised him the whole winter, he jumped out of his enclosure and escaped. For several weeks we searched but couldn't find him.

In the village beside the school was an orphanage that was called The Children's Little Town. It was located not far from our cottage and near the village cooperative on the street leading from the church square toward the doctor's office. Those children did not attend the village school, but they had their own teachers and instructors, with whom we had good relationships. One of the instructors, a friend of ours, discovered that the children, in agreement with the cook, were bringing the discards of food from the kitchen to the basement. He followed them and found out that they were feeding a piglet.

Interrupting each other, the children told him:

"We found the piglet in our orphanage yard..."

"We chased and chased him..."

"Finally, when we captured him, we gave him refuge in the basement..."

"And we were feeding him every day!"

When our friend heard that our piglet had disappeared, he notified us, and we rescued the poor animal, which had become skinny after two weeks of poor nutrition.

Although we had friendly relations with all the teachers from our school and the teachers and instructors from the orphanage, one of them, an Austrian, a former prisoner of war with Germany who married a Russian woman and remained in Russia, became our very good friend. He was the vocational instructor in the orphanage woodshop. We often visited his family, and they visited us. They also had a daughter about one year older than Lyalya.

One day we were visiting our friends, and they pulled out of a trunk a beautiful doll with a porcelain face, arms, and legs, and dressed in an elegant gown decorated with fine lace. She opened and closed her eyes and had curly blond hair with a big bow. Everybody was admiring it. For those days in the Soviet Union, it was an unusual doll. It was made in Austria and was a present

from his parents to their granddaughter. It was kept hidden all the time, and they did not allow even their daughter to play with it. That day they allowed each girl to hold the doll while an adult was keeping hands on it for safety. When the time came for us to go home, Lyalya began to cry and wanted to bring the doll home. There was no way to calm her down or to reason with her; she was obstinate in her demand. Finally, our friends agreed to let us take the doll for one evening with the condition that it would be returned the next morning.

Lyalya was about three years old at that time and, when we got home, both Tonya and I decided that it was foolish not to allow her to hold the doll. We were both convinced that she would just hold it for a while and calm herself down. She was sitting on a chair, holding the doll and admiring it. Suddenly, she decided to get down, and in that moment... Oh, what a horror! The doll fell on the wooden floor, and one side of the porcelain face broke into small pieces...

I collected all the pieces up to the last microscopic particle and stayed up the whole night gluing it all together. Early in the morning I drove to Yuzovka, where I found an artist who was able to repaint it quite well, but of course, the masterpiece was damaged forever. For our friends it was a deep disappointment, and after it happened, our friendship remained damaged, too.

Another good friend that we had in Nizhnyaya Krynka was a physician who lived far from us, up on the hill. Our families also used to visit each other. We simply called him Doctor and I cannot remember his last name. He was the only one close enough to help in any medical emergency.

One day Lyalya, as she liked to do and as she had done many times before, was going round-and-round the post on the *zavalinka*, then stopping to see everything spinning around her. It was fun—until she could not keep her equilibrium and suddenly fell down on the ground, where she hit a big stone with a sharp point.

Tonya heard crying, ran out of the cottage, and found Lyalya with a big cut on her forehead. She grabbed her in her arms and began to run to the doctor. A storm was nearing, the lightning was flashing across the sky, and the thunder roared over her head—all the things Tonya was so afraid of from her childhood.⁶ However, she was so scared seeing her daughter's bloody

forehead, she didn't seem to notice the lightning or the thunder. The heavy rain poured on them, but she kept running and running. When she reached the doctor's home, they were both wet to the skin.

In the middle of Lyalya's forehead was a big swollen bump with a large cut—it looked like her brains were coming out. Doctor sewed the wound with several stitches and put a cold compress on the bump. When the storm ended, the doctor sent a youngster to the school to call me, and I came to take them home.

After two years in Nizhnyaya Krynka, I suggested to the *Narobras* that there was a need to add another three years of studies to our four-year school. Many parents of the village children who completed the four years wanted them to continue their studies. *Narobras* approved it, and the Selsoviet gave the school another building that was located across the street. It had three big rooms and served well for this purpose. Therefore, I organized there the so-called *Semiletka*, or a Seven-Year School.

Tonya was teaching Russian language there, which was then a required subject in all Ukrainian schools. I asked *Narobras* to hire new teachers for the elementary grades and to teach other subjects in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. I still remember some of the names of those teachers; one was Rozhko and another was Fyedorov.

Then there was a young woman teacher whose name I don't recall, but I remember that she had dark-brown eyes, black hair, was light complexioned with cheeks the color of a cherry just picked up from the tree. Being young, single, and pretty, she had all the male teachers from our school and from the orphanage running after her. She always complained to Tonya that she didn't know to whom she should give her preference, "They all are so nice; how can I select who is right for me?" With all her popularity with men, she did not have any luck with her pupils and had a very hard time maintaining discipline in her classes—one could hear her constantly screaming at the pupils.

I remember another incident that happened when the newly appointed—by Bolshevik authorities—manager of the *Kolbud* called a villagers' meeting to organize the various cultural clubs. He ordered all former choristers of the church choir to become members of the village choir club and brought them sheet music with the new revolutionary songs to learn for the performances

during the newly introduced revolutionary festivities. Then he appointed one of our teachers to organize a theater club and promised that copies for the performances of the proletarian plays would be furnished from the *Raykom Agitprop*⁷ office. But he showed his Bolshevik distorted ingenuity by appointing the teacher Fyedorov, who was a son of a former village priest, to conduct the anti-religious propaganda lectures. To the teacher's complaint that he would not know how to do it, the *Kolbud* manager answered, "Don't you worry. If you are able to read, the Raykom Agitprop office will supply you with all the instructions and pamphlets needed to do this."

Another incident in the village was a big fire that engulfed a cottage standing not far from ours on the church square. It is amazing that my daughter Lyalya, who was not yet four years old, remembered this fire all her life. It happened late at night, and the flames from the burning thatched straw roof shoot high into the dark sky. The owner, a very tall muzhik, was standing in front of his burning cottage screaming in desperation and tearing apart his white shirt. Everyone from the neighborhood was on the church square and on the neighboring streets. They were bringing buckets of water to splash on the fire, fearing that the flames would spread to the straw roofs of their own cottages. Luckily there was no wind, not even the slightest, and the fire burned itself out without damaging any other structure.

Being always in the classroom with us, Lyalya showed very early an interest in reading and writing. I started to teach her to read when she was about three-and-a-half years old and to write a few months later. I used a whole-word method. All the walls in our cottage were patched with papers on which I drew pictures of familiar objects, and under the picture in large letters, I printed the name for it. Every day I would go with my daughter around the rooms until she learned the words. Then I would switch the place of the pictures in the room and train her until I was sure that she was able to recognize them. Next, I would cover up the picture and leave only the word until she was able to name them all.

In the same way I taught her to write. I did not teach the single letters, but right away taught her to write whole words. By the time she was four years old, she was writing letters to her grandfather. We kept one of her postcards for a long time as a

keepsake. She wrote by herself with big letters on the address side: "Nikitovka, Telegraph, Dyeda8 Gladky," and on the other side: "Dear Dyeda come soon. Kisses. Lyalya."

My father was so impressed that he came with my brother Igor to visit us in Nizhnyaya Krynka. Since I had never returned to Nikitovka from the time of my flight from the GPU inquiries, it was the first time that my father had seen his granddaughter. Igor had come once before to visit us during his school vacations, and at that time he got sick from eating too many cherries in our garden.

After Lyalya had learned to read and write, she followed the Russian lessons in her mother's classes, sitting on the back desk. She learned arithmetic sitting in my classroom. Since she challenged herself to do the more advanced problems, I just followed her progress at her own speed.

In 1927, Tonya had an infection in the right cheekbone⁹. It spread from a badly made filling made by her sister Tanya when she was practicing as a dental student in Kharkov. Our friend the village doctor ordered Tonya to consult a specialist immediately. She was lucky that she had a large opening to the nasal cavity and some pus was discharged through it, relieving the pressure and preventing it from going to the brain. She arrived in time at the clinic at the Slavyansk Kurort, where many famous doctors of all specialties came during the summer from all over the country. One well-known professor from Kharkov performed the operation. We still remember that he broke his instrument in making the opening in the bone through the nose and blamed it on Tonya's hard bones. According to this professor, only a few days' delay could have resulted in the infection going to the brain—with tragic results and probably death.

While Tonya was in Slavyansk, Lyalya was staying with my sister Anya, who was living with her common-law husband, Sergey Ivanovich Plokhodyn, in Taganrog. Anya worked as a nurse in a hospital, and Sergey was employed by the railroad station. They lived in a big house that once belonged to a rich family. The house had been adapted as an apartment house for many families. It had a long, poorly lighted hall with many doors to the single- and two-room apartments. Although there was a small common kitchen shared by all tenants, in front of each door in the hall there was a small stool with a one-burner primus-stove

for cooking.

I asked my sister why they didn't get married. Anya explained to me in a whisper, "These walls have many ears... As you know, I met Sergey in a hospital when he was recuperating from typhoid fever. Meanwhile, his White Cossacks regiment, where he was an officer, had retreated from the Reds. We moved here to the bigger town, where nobody knows him, but many of my schoolmates know me and our cousin Bonifaty's family. Until now the strategy has worked quite well. But Sergey doesn't want anything to happen to me if he is arrested." Then she added, "Every time we hear somebody at the door, we are afraid that the GPU agents are here to arrest him."

"Yes," I answered, "I know what you mean. This 'White' past is haunting me, too. In Nikitovka and in Yuzovka, I found out in time to slip away from the investigations. So far in the village we've been lucky; the need for teachers who can teach in Ukrainian is so great that we have been left in peace for these two years. Who knows what to expect tomorrow?"

When I came to take Lyalya home, the famous Durov Circus was performing in Taganrog, and I took her to see it. What a remarkable spectacle it was! For years and years Lyalya remembered many details.¹⁰

One of the best performances by the animals and birds was the act called "The Train." A big white goose wearing a red cap and black jacket was the railroad stationmaster, who pulled a cord with his beak to ring the bell announcing the arrival and the departure of the train.

In the station barber shop there were two chimpanzees; one, sitting in front of a big mirror, portrayed a passenger waiting for the train, and the other was a barber wearing a white coat. The barber chimp put a big white towel around the neck of the passenger chimp, then with big brush spread foam on her face and started to shave the foam with a huge razor. What a comedy it was, as both of the chimps were making all kinds of grimaces!

Then the train arrived with some animals sitting in the passenger cars and looking through the windows. Some others were running on the platform to catch the train and were accommodating themselves in the empty seats. Then there were animals that came to see the passengers off, and they were waving their paws. There were all kinds of animals, all dressed in

fancy hats and outfits, holding bags and umbrellas. There were poodles and other small dogs, cats, foxes, raccoons, bunnies, and very small chimps, penguins in their dinner coats and tall hats, and other funny exotic animals. Some were walking on hind feet and some on all fours, and all were rushing and running like real people when they have to catch the train.

After that there were elephants that danced, standing on their hind legs and walking carefully over a beautifully dressed girl who was lying on the ground.

And there were clowns! Oh, clowns! Short and tall, skinny and fat, with big red mouths and funny hats, multi-colored costumes and hilarious tricks—rolling on the floor, jumping, dancing, skipping, falling, crying, laughing...

Then there were dancing and prancing horses and a beautiful horsewoman in a shimmering costume... And the big brown Russian bear dancing and fighting with his trainer... And the ferocious lions obediently walking over to sit on high stools... And high in the air acrobats flying on the trapeze and walking fearlessly on the wire... It was a lifetime experience! Lyalya talked about this and that scene year after year, remembering many details of what she had seen when she was only four years old.

Until the year 1927, our life in the village was going smoothly and harmoniously with the other teachers in our school, with the parents of our pupils, and in general within the village community. In fact, all we remember are mostly the everyday experiences that happened in our family, in the school, and in the village. Nothing had happened during that time to disturb our idyllic life in the country.

Then across the whole Soviet Union the new period called “collectivization” began, one of the most devastating and terrible periods for the peasantry. In the winter of 1927–1928, two Bolshevik party members were assigned to our village from the *Raykom*¹¹ of the party. One was a collectivization agent and another, Comrade Gavriylov, was appointed as chairman of the to-be-organized kolkhoz in Nizhnyaya Krynka. They came at regular intervals to conduct meetings about the collectivization in the village and in the neighboring farmsteads. They brought mountains of propaganda brochures with them from the *Raykom Agitprop*¹² office with an order and instructions to the village Selsoviet that all those brochures about the organization of the

kolkhoz had to be read to the peasants at the village and farmsteads meetings, and the reports about those meetings had to be sent on time to the *Raykom*.

As the teacher and the principal of the local school, I was ordered by the Raykom agents to act as a secretary for all meetings that they conducted and to write the reports for them. Every time the village and farmsteads meeting was called, I was ordered by the Selsoviet chairman, Comrade Ofitserov, to come to the meeting to read all this propaganda literature and to write a report of the meeting. I did it with great reluctance, but I could not refuse it, knowing the consequences of losing my position. I knew that Comrade Ofitserov, as a former miner, was not literate enough to read it or to write the reports, and it became a part of my duties as a literate person to do this repugnant task.

Ipsa facto, I was forced to act as a “propaganda mouth” of the Raykom Agitprop office for the collectivization. At all those meetings the peasants saw me, me as a person, in front of them reading the propaganda garbage. And there was no misunderstanding—they could hear the words that were coming from my mouth, not flying from the piece of paper in my hands. They were listening with distrust to the words that described all the “benefits, joys, and advantages” of giving up all their farm animals, all their land, and themselves to the kolkhoz—the collective farm—where everything would belong to “all” in common, and to nobody in particular. The villagers didn’t have to be very clever or literate to understand that what they were being asked to do was to suddenly give to kolkhoz everything they had and become the “have-nots.”

Muzhyks listened to all this propaganda in silence. Then after one of the meetings, one of them asked me, “And you, you will also enroll in the kolkhoz?”

I looked at the chairman of the Selsoviet, who nodded with his head, suggesting that I say, “Yes.” What could I answer under those circumstances? And I answered something like this, “If it should become necessary, I would have to enroll, too.”

Well, after these meeting muzhiks in the village began to be very hostile toward me. After several more meetings were held, with the collectivization agent pressuring the peasants more and more to enroll voluntarily in the *kolkhoz*, the hostility was slowly turning into hatred toward the agent and me. I was standing in

the middle of their battle with the Soviet authorities. The only difference was that, after the meeting the collectivization agent would return to the regional office in Khartsisk, but I would remain in the village, and was an easy target for the revenge of the frustrated muzhiks. And who could have blamed them? I was on their side but could do nothing about it; they couldn't do anything, either. I was in the middle of their battle to preserve their property and way of life.

By February of 1928, all peasants of Nizhnyaya Krynka were finally forced to sign a declaration that they had "voluntarily enrolled" into kolkhoz, as it was officially reported by the collectivization agent in the declaration written by me under his dictation and presented to the Raykom. The same shameful farce was happening everywhere in the villages and farmsteads throughout the Soviet Union. The chairman of the new kolkhoz, Bolshevik Comrade Gavriylov, who was appointed by the Raykom, arrived shortly afterwards to live and work in the village.

I am sure that the peasants were convinced that I was the agent of the Raykom and therefore considered me their enemy; they began to play all kinds of dirty tricks on me. The worst of it was that their revenge also became directed against my family. At night they would throw stones at the windows of our cottage. We had to lock all the window shutters and doors and stay in the hall, or in the room in which the windows looked out on the courtyard. Our devoted dog Sharyk performed very well during this difficult time. Every evening and at intervals during the night, I would give him my command, "Sharyk, go and search!" He would run around the house and near the fence in the courtyard and at the slightest rustle would bark, and bark, and bark like he understood that something was wrong and that he had to be more vigilant than he had ever been before.

By the end of the school year, we got tired of being harassed and living in the constant tension of not knowing what would happen next. Therefore, we decided to move from Nizhnyaya Krynka. During the winter I had already started to prepare myself for this possibility and had enrolled in a bookkeeping course at the correspondence school in Rostov-on-Don. I thought that one more specialization could be helpful in finding employment. After the school was closed for the summer vacations, I had to go

and take the examination in bookkeeping at Rostov-on-Don.

On my way there I stopped to visit my sister Anya and my cousin Bonifaty in Taganrog, where I wanted to also explore the opportunities of finding employment. But both of them suggested that in Taganrog, too many people knew me as a student in the gymnasium and knew that I was from Nikitovka. And this would make it very easy for the authorities to find out everything about my past in case of an investigation. They suggested that I look in places where nobody knew me.

We talked with Anya about our father who was ill—the local doctor suspected it was tuberculosis. I told her I was planning to stop on my way back in Nikitovka to see my father, my sister Vera, and my brother Igor and that I would let her know about my father's condition.

Anya and Bonifaty told me that our cousin Boris, a son of Uncle Pyetr, had visited them quite recently and that he was living in Rostov-on-Don, and Anya gave me his address. After I passed the examinations in bookkeeping, I found my cousin Boris, who told me the tragic story¹³ of what had happened to him and to his sister Lida. But I was glad that he had learned to work as a movie projectionist and had steady work at the movie theater. He was also planning to visit his sister Lida and his father in Crimea.

On my return to Nizhnyaya Krynka, Tonya and I had to make a decision about where we would move from there.

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1. *Selsoviet*—acronym for *Selsky Soviet*—the Village Soviet.
 2. *Kolbud*—acronym for *Kollektyvny Budynok* (in Ukrainian)—a collective's building.
 3. *Rayispolkom*—acronym for *Rayonny Ispolnytyelny Kommityet*—The District Executive Committee.
 4. Which means “a little ball.”
 5. A sound used in Ukraine to command the horses to stop.
 6. See the chapter “The Thunderstorms.”
 7. *Raykom Agitprop*—acronym for *Rayonny Komityet of Agitazyi i Propagandy*—The Regional Committee of Agitation and Propaganda.
 8. Short for Dyedushka, “a grandfather,” as commonly used by small children.
 9. Called Gaymorov's cavity.

10. This episode as remembered by Olga Gladky Verro.
11. *Rayounny Komityet*—The District Committee.
12. *Agitprop*—acronym for *Agitatsiya y propaganda*—agitation and propaganda.
13. From the story “Lidka” by Orest M. Gladky.



Cross and Needle

By Orest M. Gladky

When Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy returned to Slavyansk, as he expected, right away, he had plenty of work. Some of the first orders he received were from customers who were dissatisfied with the outfits made for them by the newly established Tailoring Cooperative Workshop. All of them complained about the sloppy workmanship on garments sewn for them there. Some even brought items that had been made there and begged him to fit them properly and make alterations, because the outfits looked as if they had been made to fit someone else's figure.

Then he heard from some of his former apprentices who worked at the Tailoring Cooperative that things there were not going too well. This happened because the Co-op had several tailors who called themselves "master tailors" but didn't even know how to draft patterns to fit their customers. Instead they cut the cloth by a set of patterns supplied by a government office in charge of all tailoring cooperatives in the region.

One of his former apprentices said, "You should only see the waste and pilferage that is going on! They should have closed the cooperative a few months after it opened, because it wasn't making a profit. But no one cares because the manager decides how much money to send to the Regional Government Tailoring Cooperatives Office each week. And nobody there checks on anything that goes on in the tailor shop or how much the Cooperative takes in from the customers. The workers just receive their established pay from the regional office."

One day, Gavriyl Danilovich had an unexpected visit from his former apprentice, Styopa Bolotov, who had never learned his trade well enough to be a good apprentice. Nevertheless, he was now manager of the Tailoring Cooperative Workshop located at Soborny Square. Gavriyl Danilovich, as usual, sat cross-legged on the *katok*, as he called the tailor's table, basting in a sleeve onto a jacket. Comrade Bolotov, as he was now called, positioned

himself near the sewing machine in front of his former master.

In contrast to his previous hostile visits¹ before Gavriyl Danilovich had fled to Yuzovka, when the newly transformed revolutionary, apprentice Styopa, had intimidated his former master with all kinds of threats, this time comrade Bolotov started conversation in a very conciliatory way.

After a few introductory conventional phrases asking about his former master's health, comrade Bolotov quickly came to the point of his visit, "I came to invite you, Gavriyl Danilovich, to join our Tailoring Cooperative. You have probably already heard that we have many qualified tailors and apprentices there, so it would be in your best interests to join a good workers team."

"No, Styopa, I will not join your Cooperative," calmly but determinedly answered Gavriyl Danilovich. "You don't need an old man there. You said yourself that you have many qualified tailors without me."

"Believe me, it would be greatly to your advantage," insisted comrade Bolotov. "Eight hours of work, then time off, no need to work late into the night to finish work for some demanding customer. In the Cooperative, we set the time when the item will be ready, not the customers. Also, for you there will be no special income tax to pay, which is imposed on private tradesmen. And the authorities will see that you became one of the workers laboring for the Cooperative, rather than for yourself. Nowadays, of course, Gavriyl Danilovich, politics take first place."

No matter how much Styopa Bolotov tried to persuade his former master to join the Tailoring Cooperative, it was like beating his head against a wall, for the stubborn old man was unyielding. He didn't even stop basting the sleeve, as if it were more important than this conversation.

"No, Styopa, I already told you, I will not join your Cooperative. You used to work for me, and you know that I did not allow politics in my shop. The Tsar might have been good or bad, but you never heard anything about it in my place."

"Yes, but what about the Soviet government?" interrupted Styopa.

"What about it?" asked Gavriyl Danilovich, and without waiting for an explanation, he answered his own hypothetical question, "Certainly, taxes imposed on private tradesmen are oppressive, but meanwhile, I still earn bread for my family." Then

he raised his eyes from his work and added, "But, as regards working eight hours a day, it is too much for a man of my age. You see, here I can work for a while on these sleeves, and then I can lie down and have a little nap for an hour or so. Sometimes, I might not even finish one buttonhole in a whole day, and nobody complains about it," he exaggerated a little.

"We will fix up a cot or perhaps a nice couch for you," Styopa said accommodatingly. "And, anyway, you will be only taking measurements from the customers, making fittings when they come in, and guiding the cutters in adjusting the patterns to the customers' measurements. You see, you will have plenty of time to rest in between... You don't even have to take a needle into your hand or sew on a machine!"

"That would not be working," Gavriyl Danilovich interrupted him. "I couldn't do it that way. In any case, what would I earn?"

"Don't you worry about that—we will see that you are fairly treated, Gavriyl Danilovich!" hurriedly answered Styopa with animation, hoping that his former master was ready to bite at the worm he dangled on his hook. Then—to be sure not to lose his perceived advantage in reasoning with the old man—he suddenly changed his persuasions from the sweet promises to fear tactics. "But, the main thing is the income tax imposed on private tradesmen. It will ruin you. Have you seen the new regulations? They will swallow up all private enterprises!"

"God is merciful," his old master calmly answered, "I will always earn a piece of bread for my family, and there is a well in the courtyard where the water is always clean and fresh."

Then Styopa Bolotov felt he needed to apply the more radical revolutionary methods of persuasion on the old man so he told him: "Well, there's still another thing. You used to be a man of property. You owned two brick houses, each two-storied ones. And in your workshop you employed a master tailor, a foreman, and two young apprentices. All those things are looked upon now as 'exploitation of the workingmen.' Don't forget that you will be declared a *lishenyets*² for all of that! And then, don't you forget, your children went to gymnasiums and universities, and you paid for all of them..."

Styopa stopped for a while, collecting in his mind all kinds of sins with which he could blackmail his former master. Then, with an air of self-righteousness, he reproached the old man: "There is

something more I want to mention to you—that's about that icon." And with a sharp gesture, he extended the whole arm at the corner where it hung. "You must take it down right away, Gavriyl Danilovich, because all kinds of people come to you as customers, and that's religious propaganda you are promoting..." As he glanced at the ancient image while pointing at it irreverently with his finger, the dark face of the Savior looked down at Styopa with gentle eyes, and it seemed to whisper to him, "Take heed—you are straying from my ways." Styopa looked away from the icon and shrank back. For a few seconds, he looked like a puppy that had suddenly fallen into the water. It was obvious that his conscience was not yet completely smothered. It woke up for a moment and sharply pricked his hardening heart.

Gavriyl Danilovich silently put aside his work, looked at his former apprentice over the top of his steel-rimmed spectacles, which were perched on the very tip of his nose, then he got up from his cross-legged position, and got down from the *katok*. Only then he began to speak, calmly and resolutely, as if Styopa had not reproached or offended him. "Listen, you disbeliever, I was born a Christian, I have lived a long life with Him, and I shall die praising His name. Don't you dare speak to me about removing my icon. Your mind has become muddled. I am the master in my house, and that icon is here to stay."

Then he changed the subject but still continued to lecture his former apprentice: "As for the past, it is not for you to talk to me like that, Styopa. You spent seven or almost eight years with me. You saw for yourself that I worked alongside you, yes, even harder than you. Because, when you had worked the hours for which you were paid, you had your time off, but not me. How many times I sat up the whole night long to finish work due the next day."

Gavriyl Danilovich stopped to catch his breath and then continued, "You say that I had built houses. Yes, I built them by my own hard work and my reputation as a master tailor and an honest man whom the local merchants and the bank could trust to lend money to build those houses. I have never underpaid, nor cheated, nor robbed anyone in order to build them. They were taken from me before I could finish repaying my loan. Besides, those houses have already gone to the Soviet government, and it's

no use remembering them. I don't even think about them. What's done is done and can't be undone."

Styopa stood there, stunned by his former master's courage in opposing all of his persuasions and threats. He felt very uncomfortable, but there was no way he could stop him.

And Gavriyl Danilovich continued, "Did you say I educated my children? Yes, I have educated them. It was my duty to do it. Am I not my children's father? It is wicked to reproach me for that!"

Then Gavriyl Danilovich came closer to Styopa and, looking him straight in the eyes, said, "But, as far as joining the Tailoring Cooperative, what would I be doing there? When all is said and done, I am still a master tailor here, and my work is appreciated by my customers. But there, with the shabby quality of work you do..." He didn't finish the sentence.

Styopa Bolotov knew that what Gavriyl Danilovich said was perfectly true, but it annoyed him to be reminded that the "old man" was the master tailor and not himself, and he knew that in the Cooperative Workshop only assistants and apprentices were working. Abruptly, with both hands, Styopa pushed in the chest of the old man who stood too close to him and angrily said, "You will regret this, Gavriyl Danilovich!" And he rushed out the door without any further words.

Gavriyl Danilovich went out onto the porch. In his mind resounded Styopa's reproaching words, and now answers that he had not had a chance to tell him flowed readily from his lips: "That disbeliever! The icon disturbed him! Doesn't he remember that I was an Elder of the Church, and it has not been just a year or two, but more then twenty years, that I have served God and the congregation, in what used to be the Cathedral, the very same one that the 'comrades Bolsheviks' have closed now and set up a Workers Club there. The blasphemers! And at another church by the cemetery, they want to open an anti-religion museum.

"There is a rumor in town that they will soon close all the churches in Russia. Ah, well..." He gave a heavy sigh, "It seems that everything will soon come to an end... The Bolsheviks have power and might... But they cannot shut out God the Everlasting, Omnipresent..."

The shaggy old yard dog, Arap, came up wagging his tail, licked his master's slippered feet, then lay his head down on them

and gazed up at his master with sorrowful black eyes. "Well, my old Arapushka, we are both grown old and weak. It is almost time for us to retire. Still, we seem to be needed. They insult us, you see, but it seems they cannot get on without us."

Gavriyl Danilovich slowly came down from the porch steps and strolled around the small garden. He didn't feel inclined to work. Thoughts of the past mingled with those of the present, emphasizing the gulf that existed between the full, vital life of his yesteryears and the emptiness of his life today. But however hard life was now, he felt a deep sense of satisfaction in knowing that his long life had not been fruitless.

The scent of the awakening earth and the spring flowers elated him; he loved to see the revival of nature and feel God's beauty in the tender flower petals and in the fresh green garden. And as he slowly strolled along the garden path, he continued to review his life in his mind.

"The houses, they took them, they are gone. The children, that's a different matter. The oldest, Nikolay—an architect—he builds houses better than mine were. Tanya—she's a dentist; Tonya—is a schoolteacher; Nyusya—will be soon an eye doctor. Only Vanya didn't turn out so well. It's true he's a bookkeeper, but he tipples, vodka leads to no good. Well, I can't really blame him—for he's been chased around like an unlucky hare by hounds. And all because he joined the White army as a volunteer when he was a lad; he was not quite of age at the time. Even a wise father wouldn't have punished him for that. But now the new rulers take it out on him in every way they can, investigating his past and dismissing him from jobs."

Gavriyl Danilovich's thought switched from the living to the dear ones who were gone forever from this life.

"And Shura, my sweet and gentle son, Shura, God rest his soul, he had been in the White army, too; he was a true patriot who lost his life defending Russia from the Reds. He died of typhoid fever while recuperating from his wounds at the military hospital in Taganrog and was buried there. My wife went there to see that his funeral was properly done according to Christian Orthodox rites. Then my wife and my daughter, Olga, died shortly after, both in the same year of typhoid fever in Yuzovka and were buried in the old cemetery next to each other. They are all gone—only I and my little son Pyetya are left. He must be

educated, and then I can rest in peace."

Although saddened and considerably aged during these few tragic years, Gavriyl Danilovich accepted patiently his destiny as a devoted Christian. Once tall and erect, his back now was curved from long hours spent sitting at the treadle sewing machine or cross-legged on the tailor's table while tailoring by hand. His once dark-brown wavy hair had turned gray but was still neatly parted on the side. His bushy eyebrows were now also gray, and deep wrinkles furrowed his forehead. His long mustache was sprinkled with gray, and his long, soft beard that was connected by the sideburns to his temples was now silver-gray but still shaped straight at the bottom. He smoked a lot, and the hot ash that often fell on his beard had speckled it with the burned reddish spots.

Gavriyl Danilovich gazed thoughtfully with brown eyes at the trees covered with white spring flowers and at the paths carpeted with white petals and thought, "But all this is not mine; it all belongs to my second wife. My dearly departed first wife never divided anything. But as for my second one, she always reminds me, 'This is mine, and that is yours,' although I am the breadwinner. No, I could never find another woman as good as my first wife was... I have been fair to my second wife right from the start. I established with her the same rules as I had with my first wife. I allowed her to manage the money needed for food and other household expenses, and I am responsible for managing and disbursing the money for big expenses such as heating, home repairs, clothing, and taxes. This allows us to share in managing the household and gives me enough freedom to help Nyusya until she graduates and for me to have some savings for a rainy day. But my wife is never satisfied with this arrangement. Besides, she favors her two sons in everything, all the while reminding my little Pyetya that he is not her son, making him feel unwanted."

A few days after Styopa Bolotov's visit, Gavriyl Danilovich received a notice from the Town Soviet stating the increased taxes levied on him as a private craftsman. The income tax was more than three thousand rubles and had to be paid on time. Gavriyl Danilovich took the news with contempt by reasoning, "If I sold up everything that I own, even then I would still be in debt. I know that the Tailoring Cooperative wants to have my good name—Master Tailor Berezhnoy—it would be a feather in their

hat. Well no matter, I will carry on the fight while I still have strength!"

Gavriyl Danilovich knew that all the smart people in town came with their orders to him and not to the Cooperative, because their fabric was wasted if they took it there. When the customer brought in material for a three-piece suit, they scarcely got a two-piece out of it, and even that fitted shamefully bad. How many of these workshop-made suits he had already altered! "I will charge my customers more so I can pay my taxes," he decided.

Shortly after receiving the tax notice, a Town Soviet official arrived, the manager of the Financial Department himself, comrade Gorbunov. It was not the first time that Gavriyl Danilovich had made suits for him. He knew that Gorbunov was very particular—he liked to dress well and had a very good taste. He also knew that Gorbunov valued him because no other tailor had ever fitted him better.

"Good day, Gavriyl Danilovich," Gorbunov greeted him. "I have come with some rather urgent work for you."

"Good day, Vasily Illarionovich," answered Gavriyl Danilovich with a sorrowful expression on his face and shaking his head. "I am afraid you will have to wait; I have a lot of orders on hand. It has been a fine spring, and every one of my good customers wants a new suit."

"Come now, you know me, we are old acquaintances. You know I will treat you fairly, Gavriyl Danilovich."

"I am afraid it is I that will not treat you fairly, Vasily Illarionovich. I have to raise my labor costs considerably."

"Why? Has bread become dearer, or needles?" Gorbunov laughingly questioned him.

"Neither the bread, nor the needles have increased in price lately, but your tax notices have got dearer." And Gavriyl Danilovich drew the fresh tax bill out of his waistcoat pocket and handed it to Vasily Illarionovich.

The manager of the Finance Department looked at it and smiled, "Oh, oh! Old man, if you sold everything you possess, you would not be able to clear yourself."

"Why should I sell out? I will pay it," Gavriyl Danilovich answered decisively.

"And how do you intend to do that? Rob the state bank?"

"Well, let me explain it. You need a three-piece suit, don't

you?"

"That's what I came here for."

"Well, from now on, my charge will be five hundred rubles for this work, Vasyliy Illarionovich—I can't do it for any less, if I am to pay my taxes."

"Well, well, Gavriyl Danilovich, what you would say if I told you that you must continue to charge me at your old price..."

"Two hundred rubles?" the old tailor questioned.

"Yes, two hundred rubles," confirmed Vasyliy Illarionovich.

"But in that case, I will not be able to make ends meet!" exclaimed Gavriyl Danilovich.

"Wait a minute, let me finish," Vasyliy Illarionovich interrupted him. "Give me a piece of paper."

Gavriyl Danilovich tore a clean sheet out of the notebook that he used for writing down details of his customers' orders and handed it to him. Vasyliy Illarionovich swiftly wrote, filling half a page and then said, "Have someone else copy this for you, so it will not be in my handwriting. This is an application to the Regional Finance Department to have your income tax lowered on the grounds of ill health and old age. There is a regulation about this, but only they have the authority to lower the taxes. When they inquire in our office about you, I will personally take care of it. You will pay less tax than you paid before receiving this notice."

"Thank you, Vasyliy Illarionovich; then everything will be as before—the price, I mean..." Gavriyl Danilovich assured him.

"Yes, but you'll make my suit as soon as possible?" prompted the manager of the Finance Department.

"Can you come to be fitted in three days' time?" Gavriyl Danilovich replied with a smile.

"Of course, I can!"

"Very well, in a week your suit will be ready."

"Good! That's the way to treat your good customers!" And Vasyliy Illarionovich then explained what details he wanted, what style of buttons, what shape of the lapels and the collar... Gavriyl Danilovich checked his client's measurements, just in case he might have gained a few pounds, and then they said goodbye, each happy with the other.

"Nothing can be done without God's help," thought Gavriyl Danilovich, "but I won't go to the Cooperative Workshop!"

The summer passed. Everything settled down and was calm. The Tailoring Cooperative worked for itself, and Gavriyl Danilovich worked for himself. His taxes, thanks to Vasily Illarionovich's help, were now lowered. And none of his customers were ever charged five hundred rubles for a suit.

But life under Soviet rule was full of unexpected happenings, some of them comical, as in the case of his taxes. Others did not make any difference for Gavriyl Danilovich, as in the case of his voting rights. Before elections were held for Soviet government offices, he received a notice informing him that he had been deprived of voting rights because before the revolution he had owned two brick homes and his own tailor shop, in which he had "exploited a master, a foreman, and apprentices."

"Big deal!" Gavriyl Danilovich commented and thought, "As a lishenets I don't have to go and vote for candidates whose names are on the ballot only because they are Bolsheviks and not because they know how to govern." Then he thought about his son, "It's, however, a different story for Ivan, who is also deprived of voting rights because he was a volunteer in the White Army. It is a tragedy for him, because he cannot find steady work. As soon as they find out that he was a lishenyets, they fire him. That's why he started drinking. But vodka does not lead to anything good."

Of course, some of the unexpected happenings were just plain dreadful, like the time the government needed gold in order to pay for the industrial equipment bought from the capitalist countries. This time the government desperately wanted gold. You had to give them gold, even if you were broke! In the cities, towns, and the thousands of small hamlets and villages all over the Russian land, millions of people lived in a state of wild terror. Men and women took off all their rings (even their wedding rings), Christening crosses, earrings, and locket and hid them in the most inaccessible places. They buried them in the ground and plastered them into walls, but still the GPU agents obstinately demanded, "Give us your gold!"

One day Gavriyl Danilovich's turn came. A GPU agent called on him. The old tailor was sitting cross-legged, as usual, on his *katok* with one foot tucked under him, working silently. The GPU agent entered without knocking, pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket and, reading the name on it, inquired, "Which one here is Berezhnoy?"

"I am," answered Gavriyl Danilovich.

"Get ready, old man, and come along," GPU agent ordered.

"Where to?"

"To the GPU," was the short and simple answer.

There was nothing else to do but to get ready and obey the agent's order, because Gavriyl Danilovich knew that he could not refuse to go when summoned by that infamous government institution. So, he just buttoned up his shirt collar, put on his jacket, and followed the agent.

At the GPU they didn't bother to waste words, "Give us your gold, old man!"

"Where am I supposed to have gotten this gold?" asked Gavriyl Danilovich in astonishment.

"We know where from. You'd better not deny it. Hand it over!"

"I tell you, I have none," replied the old man.

"You had better hand it over at once," they said, "Otherwise, it will be the worse for you."

"I am telling you, on my honor, that I have no gold," he insisted.

"You can't deceive us. You built two houses on Kharkovsky Street. You also had a tailoring workshop and exploited your workers. You educated your children at gymnasiums and sent them to universities, and now you pretend you have no gold! Shake your coffers well; you will find some."

Gavriyl Danilovich was in no doubt as to where this denunciation came from—Styopa Bolotov. "Well," he said, "that's just where the gold went—to the houses, to the schools, to university fees, and to my tailoring business. You should ask the person who informed on me how much money he received from me in gifts over all the holidays, for Christmas and for Easter."

"Nonsense, old man, you are talking through your hat, your houses are proof of it!"

"You should ask..." Gavriyl Danilovich started, but they did not let him finish.

They ordered very sweetly, "Give us the gold, or you'll be sorry if you don't."

But Gavriyl Danilovich continued to repeat, "I have no gold and never have had, because it all went to build the houses, to pay for schools for my children, to the business, and to pay my

helpers. I always paid them well."

"I will give you until evening," told him the GPU agent sternly. "Think things over well. And don't come back here telling me lies!"

They took him to a cell. The place was full; there were many once well-to-do people there. One cried, another laughed, and another could not hide his intense agitation. Gavriyl Danilovich greeted them all. Although he was well known to everyone there, they were so preoccupied by their own troubles, or so thoroughly frightened, that none took any notice of him. So, he sat down in a corner on the stone floor and began to pray silently for his children. He didn't think about the gold, for he had none. He always spoke the truth and had never known how to lie.

While he was sitting in the corner praying, the GPU agents searched his home. They questioned his wife, demanding that she show them where the gold was hidden. The terrified old woman, trembling from head to foot and crossing herself repeatedly, answered them, "What gold, my dears? We are not robbers."

But the agents ransacked the house, ripping open pillows and feather beds, and examined the icons. Then they looked into the shed, went through the garden and the courtyard. They even searched the well, but they could not find any gold.

Later that evening Gavriyl Danilovich was called back for the interrogation. "Well, old man, we found all the gold at your home," the GPU agent declared convincingly.

"Impossible!" Gavriyl Danilovich exclaimed.

"Your old woman showed us herself where it was hidden."

"Well, then it must have been her own gold."

"What do you mean, 'hers'?" the agent asked him.

"Obviously, as I have no gold, there wasn't any of mine, so it must have been my second wife's gold. I don't know all the things she has in her possession," he explained plainly. Then he added, "Let her show me where she was hiding it."

Since the agents could not break the old man with their deception, they resorted to scare tactics, "You know if they find gold at your house, it will go hard with you. If you have deceived us, you will be shot."

"God is merciful..." replied the old man. Gavriyl Danilovich unbuttoned the collar of his shirt and drew out a cross on a black cord. Then he took out a needle with a long thread, which he

always kept stuck in the top left-hand pocket of his waistcoat, and showed them to the Chief of the GPU, who this time was interrogating him, and said proudly, “Cross and needle—there is my gold. You can take the needle. You will never take the cross.”

They let Gavriyl Danilovich go free. They did not take the cross. It was only silver. There were no orders to collect silver at that time.

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1. See the chapters “Prologue” and “My Native Home.”
 2. A person whose right to vote has been revoked because of anti-Bolshevik past or present beliefs.
 3. GPU—acronym for *Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye*—The State Political Office
 4. CheKa—acronym for *Chresvychaynaya Kommissiya*—Extraordinary Commission that acted as secret police against counterrevolutionaries from 1917 to 1921.



Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

My sister Anna, whom we all called Nyusya, was one year younger than I. She was born on September 8, 1886, in Slavyansk, Kharkovsky province. Being only one year apart, besides being sisters, we were also very good friends. We attended the same gymnasium and had many common friends who lived not far from us. Nyusya was an above-average student, but she had one weakness: she didn't like to do her homework in mathematics, and she used to ask our father to help her solve the problems. My father, who never attended school and learned all he knew from his former master tailor, patiently helped her with common-sense reasoning and directed her toward the solution of the problem by herself. But most of the time she was able to make my father solve the problem and give her the answer.

I always remember Nyusya as a lively and cheerful girl, bubbling with life. She loved to listen to me imitate all kinds of foreign languages. I remember that one time in our town many Chinese men came who sold door-to-door silk fabrics that they called *Che-su-cha*. They used to carry big bags on their backs with their merchandise and, when invited into the house, would display on the table all the fabrics. They spoke broken Russian with such a funny Chinese accent that we children could not keep from laughing. In the evening, when we would sit with Nyusya on the bench outside of our gate, I used to entertain her and would say, "I have already learned to speak Chinese." She would ask me to show how well I could talk. And I would start to babble, imitating the Chinese accent. Nyusya would laugh and laugh, and ask me to talk again and again, sometimes until she would wet her panties from laughing.

By the time she was in the last year of gymnasium, Nyusya already had a goal of becoming an eye doctor. She told me, "I saw how much you suffered with your eyes and want to learn how to heal such diseases." After she graduated from gymnasium,

neither the revolution nor the civil war had interfered with her goal and, as soon as it was possible, she enrolled in the Kharkovsky Medical Institute. Until our brother Kolya was employed and lived with his family in Kharkov, he gave her a room to stay in. Later, our father helped her pay for her room and living expenses.

When Nyusya was in the third year of her studies, she had an unexpected visit. A Jewish girl by the name of Mishkind, whom she had barely known in Slavyansk, arrived in Kharkov to attend Kharkovsky Medical Institute. She had Nyusya's address and, arriving right from the railroad station, barged into her room and asked to stay there. She said, "Until I can find a place to stay that I can afford to pay for." Nyusya's room was very small, and there was no way to put in another bed for Mishkind, who had to sleep on a trunk. Days passed by, but the uninvited roommate was not moving out, was not paying her share of a rent, and was not even mentioning that she was trying to find a room for herself.

At that time the administration of the Institute was in the process of rechecking the social status of the students' parents. There were strict instructions from the Commissariat of People's Education to expel from the institutions of higher education those students whose parents before the revolution had belonged to the social classes coined by the Bolsheviks as "enemies of the people," "blood-suckers" and "exploiters of the workers and poor peasants." This category included nobility, landowners, rich bourgeois, clergy, police, military officers, merchants, well-to-do peasants called *kulaks*, and many others.

One day Nyusya was summoned to the Institute's office and was accused of not reporting the true social status of her father on her application. They told her that they had a complaint from one of the students, who reported that Nyusya's father was a rich bourgeois and a shop owner before the revolution. Nyusya denied these accusations, saying that in her application she reported the truth that her father was a tailor. But the administration told Nyusya that they had a witness and that they were expelling her from the Institute.

In desperation Nyusya went to the Kharkovsky Commissariat of People's Education to complain about this injustice. She was admitted to the office of comrade Yan Ryapo, a Latvian communist, who at that time was a Commissar of People's

Education in the city of Kharkov. He was very patient in listening to Nyusya's complaint and told her that, if what she was telling was the truth, she should go home to Slavyansk and come back to his office with a certificate about her father's pre-revolutionary social status issued by the Town Soviet.

Nyusya suspected right away that her roommate was the one who'd reported her, so she could have the room for herself. She decided not to mention anything to her about all of this and went immediately to Slavyansk.

In Slavyansk our father had a very good customer who worked in the Town Soviet office. He made for Nyusya a special certificate to be presented to the Institute. It stated that all his life Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy had been a tailor, who worked from his home, and that he had never been a shopkeeper. Of course, he didn't mention that he was a *lishenyets*.

Nyusya returned to Kharkov and found her roommate already sleeping in her bed and obviously extremely surprised at seeing her back. This confirmed Nyusya's suspicion that she was the one who had caused her all this trouble. But Nyusya decided to wait until she was officially reinstated before throwing Mishkind out of her room.

With the certificate in her hand, Nyusya returned to the office of Commissar Ryapo, who accepted her with lots of compliments. He immediately gave an order to his secretary to write a reprimand letter to the Director of Kharkovsky Medical Institute for acting hastily without trying to investigate the complaint of the student Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya. And he ordered them to reinstate her immediately as a student with all her rights on the basis of the Slavyansk's Town Soviet certificate. At the end of the meeting with Nyusya, Commissar Yan Ryapo invited her to celebrate her victory in an exclusive club for high-ranking Communists in the city.

Nyusya was a very attractive and healthy-looking young woman. She had naturally wavy blond hair of a darker shade, and her gray eyes were always smiling. She paid great attention to her appearance, used a light, almost imperceptible makeup, and knew how to dress simply but elegantly. All this was complemented by her good manners and a personality full of life. Commissar Ryapo could not fail to notice Nyusya's gratitude and admiration for him after he helped her to win her cause with the Institute's

administration.

Commissar Ryapo at that time was in his early forties. He was more than average height, solidly built, and a good-looking man. But what attracted Nyusya most of all was that he was a mature, assertive, and self-confident person, those traits that she had not encountered yet in the young and impulsive men her own age. She quickly found that he was married, had a family and children, but, nonetheless, she allowed him to court her for some time. Nyusya fell in love with him and believed that he also loved her sincerely, too, and she hoped that one day would come when he would leave his wife and family and marry her.

Commissar Ryapo found Nyusya an apartment and furnished it with good-quality furniture. There, he could come to visit her with reasonable discretion. This relationship continued almost to the end of her last year in the institute. Then suddenly he stopped visiting her. Not knowing what happened to him, Nyusya was very preoccupied. She went to his office and found out that he was seriously ill, but was at home, not in a hospital. During this time Nyusya also discovered she was pregnant. This gave her more courage to face his wife, and she decided at any cost to visit her lover at his apartment.

His wife did let Nyusya in. From her calm, composed, and restrained greetings, Nyusya deduced that she knew, or maybe suspected, who she was. Ryapo's wife accompanied Nyusya to the bedroom where her husband was resting in bed and excused herself, leaving them alone.

Nyusya saw that he was recovering well and decided that it would not be damaging to his health to tell him about her pregnancy. Yan Ryapo didn't show any signs of being upset or unhappy with this news; in fact, he became sentimental about it and kissed Nyusya's hand. However, at the end of her visit, he told her that she should not expect him to leave his wife and children, because he would never do that, but he reassured her that he would recognize the paternity of the child and would help her financially now and in the future. Their relationship culminated with the happy event of the birth of their son, whom Nyusya named Vitaly, and Yan Ryapo recognized him as his son. This happened shortly before Nyusya's graduation from Kharkovsky Medical Institute.

After graduation Nyusya was appointed as an eye doctor in

the new hospital in the rapidly growing coal miners' hamlet of Snyezhnoye in the Donbas region of Ukraine.



Nikitovka's Last Gentleman

By Orest M. Gladky

On my way back home from Rostov-on-Don, I stopped in Nikitovka to visit my father and my sister Vera.¹ After we escaped with my wife, Tonya, from Nikitovka to Yuzovka², I tried not to return home except for very short visits because too many people knew that I had been a volunteer in the White Army.

As soon as I arrived, my sister Vera told me, "Our father is gravely ill. Because he had been coughing for a long time, the railroad doctor Bogdanov sent him to Bakhmut for a checkup to have a confirmation of his diagnosis. There the doctor said that he indeed had tuberculosis, which had reached the last stage and nothing could help him anymore."

I embraced and comforted her with gentle hugging. "You know," she told me after she took hold of her emotions, "all of his telegraph co-workers are so fond of our father. All this time that he was ill and had to stay home so often, they took turns substituting for him on the job so he wouldn't be laid off and would receive his regular salary instead of the reduced sick pay."

I found my father in very serious condition. Though he was trying not to show that he was a dying man, his appearance was awful. He was glad to see me, and Vera said that he really perked up during my one-day visit. I told them what was happening in the village and that we were planning to move from there but were not sure yet where we wanted to go.

When I was leaving the next morning, Vera told me, "As you can see, father clearly understands that he is dying and because of it suffers enormously. Loneliness increases his suffering. Being busy with the household chores, I cannot keep him company; what he needs is companionship. I think if you could move here and be with your father, you could brighten up his life a little, or better to say, the remaining days of his life that God allotted to him. My dear brother, think and talk to your wife about it. Maybe it could be a temporary solution for your problem, too. If you

think that you could move here, write to me immediately about your decision.”

When I returned home, I told Tonya about my father’s illness and about my sister’s invitation. We decided that this could be a transitional solution for us and that we would stay there probably only a short time. After all, we had decided to leave Nizhnyaya Krynka anyway. It gave us a credible and non-political reason to suddenly leave our employment. And we would at least have a place to stay while looking for employment elsewhere for our temporary relocation from the village.

Therefore, I disregarded my usual precautions and decided to try to return to my birthplace and find a position in some school, either in Nikitovka or in the neighboring communities. I sincerely hoped that maybe after all this time some changes in the revolutionary zeal of the Bolsheviks against the ex-Whites had occurred. I was prepared to try and see what direction the wind was blowing. I mailed a telegram right away to my sister notifying her that we were coming to Nikitovka immediately.

Tonya and I went to Khartsisk in *Narobras*³ office and talked to the inspector, Comrade Rymyha, with whom I had a good relationship from the time he hired us. I explained the condition of my father to him and on that ground requested a voluntary discharge from my duties of school principal, and Tonya as a teacher, which he accepted with regret. Since our records were more than excellent, this was written in our dismissal papers. In the village I turned over all school papers to the chairman of the Selsoviet, who was completely surprised with our decision.

We hired one peasant, whom we knew respected us, to transport our belongings and us to Nikitovka. Very early in the morning, before sunrise, we loaded his *harba* with the few furniture pieces we had, a trunk with our clothes, and several boxes with books and kitchen utensils. Tonya and Lyalya sat next to him on the driver’s seat, and I rode on a bicycle behind the cart, since it was about forty kilometers from Nizhnyaya Krynka to Nikitovka. At that time we didn’t know where we would find employment or where our next home would be. We only knew that it was time for us to leave here and that we had a temporary place to stay.

Only the school cleaning woman came to see us off. And the only regret we had was to leave behind our dog Sharyk, who was

yelping and trying to jump on the wagon, and wanted to go with us, as if he knew that we were not returning. He had been such a true friend to us in that difficult time that we felt almost ashamed not to take him with us. Our consolation was that the school cleaning woman, who had given him to us as a puppy, agreed to take him back.

In the summer of 1928, I returned with my family to my birthplace. It was late afternoon when the *harba* with our belongings stopped at the door of my father's apartment. We unloaded all our things and placed them wherever we could find a place in the two rooms and placed our double bed in the living-dining room area.⁴ My sister Vera had her own bedroom, and my father slept in the nook of the divided portion of the big room.

Therefore, to some degree, we all had some privacy, although one had to walk through the living room to my father's nook. My brother Igor was attending technical school in the neighboring town of Artyemovsk, the former town of Bakhmut, and was living there at that time. Vera didn't work and took care of the home and our father.

After a few days of rest, I went to the local office of *Narobras*, where I found my old acquaintances, schoolmates, and simply nice people, who right away helped me find a position as a teacher of geography in the local Seven-Year Trade School. The school was located in the former gymnasium, and its principal was a former headmistress of the Women's gymnasium in Taganrog, Mar'ya Petrovna, who for lack of qualified persons from the proletarian class was appointed to that position.

Tonya and I decided right away that, with my father being ill with tuberculosis in the last and infectious stage, it was not a place for our small daughter to live and to expose her to possible contamination. And, although my father enjoyed watching his granddaughter, her lively play sometimes disturbed him during his rest time. Vera was not used to young children running around the house and was very strict with her niece if she made noise when our father was asleep. Sometimes Lyalya would start to play on a harmonium, making discordant sounds, or would play with their cat or dog. Then she got in the habit of rocking at full speed on her grandfather's rocking chair; Vera would chase her and admonish her for it. My father, though he seemed to be sleeping, would tell her, "Vera, please, let the little girl enjoy

herself; really, she is not bothering me.” But Vera was firm in guarding our father’s tranquility.

Tonya wrote to her sister Nyusya, who after graduation from the Kharkovsky Medical Institute, was working in a hospital as an eye doctor and lived in the mining hamlet of Snyezhnoye.

Tonya asked her sister to inquire if there were any openings for teachers in the local schools. Nyusya notified her that there were some openings and that Tonya should come immediately to apply for the new school year. Tonya went there and found that the new *Gorpromuch*⁵ was opening its doors in the fall of the 1928–1929 school year. The administration was looking for a qualified teacher who had experience in working with adult students. Tonya’s previous employment at the Rabfak in Yuzovka was an invaluable reference at the time, when teachers for the many new schools for adults were hard to find. She was hired on the spot to teach Russian language and literature there.

Nyusya lived in a two-room apartment with a kitchen and an entrance hall. She offered Tonya the smaller room. We shipped our few belongings by rail to Snyezhnoye, and Tonya moved there with Lyalya.⁶

I remained in Nikitovka to keep my father company. Before the schools started in September, I dedicated my time to my father. In good weather we made short strolls on the path edged by the lilac bushes that divided the row of apartment houses from the rail tracks. During our walks we shared the last news about our relatives, about the family, and about people we knew.

On one of our first walks I told him, “Papa, when I was in Rostov-on-Don for the exams, for a few short hours I saw my cousin Boris, who told me what happened to him and his sister Lidochka⁷.”

“That rascal!” my father exclaimed. “Did he show any embarrassment about seeing you?”

“No. Why should he be embarrassed about seeing me?”

“For stealing from his uncle!” He replied reproachfully.

I tried to convince my father why Boris behaved as he did, “You know, Papa, he struggled for survival from the time he was less than nine years old; maybe his vagrant life left him with a different set of values and moral conduct. Probably he had already forgotten about stealing from you, or maybe he thought I did not know about it at all. Anyway, it happened five years ago,

when he was not yet fourteen years old and did not know how to provide for himself other than by stealing. It seems that he has straightened out his life. When I saw him, he looked quite well and was dressed decently. He was working as a projectionist in one of the movie theaters. It seems that he settled down after the unfortunate, troubled years of his childhood and youth and was talking about enrolling in a technical school. He was also planning to go to Feodosia to visit his sister and his father."

"Well," answered my father, "I had offered for him to stay with us. He didn't have to remain homeless anymore. But he chose to return to his vagrant life. Let's hope that he stays on the right track now," concluded my father with less bitterness. My father was tiring quickly, and we had to return home sooner than I expected.

In the afternoons, I usually read the newspapers and books to my father because he didn't have the strength to read for long periods of time. Sometimes I played his preferred pieces of music on his old harmonium⁸ for him. My younger brother Igor made him a crystal receiver in his radio class, and I would find the transmissions of classical music from the radio stations abroad, and then pass the earphones to my father, who was lying in bed. My father, who knew, but most of all passionately loved music, could lie in bed for hours listening to classical music. During that time his face reflected calmness and tender emotion.

It was at that time that my father received from his youngest brother Pavel⁹ a very short letter written from the town of Vladivostok. He wrote only a few conventional phrases, saying that he was alive, in good health, and hoped the same was so for all of us. And he asked us to write, if possible. It was simply signed, "Your Pavel." My father was very happy to learn that his brother was alive and well, because for several years nobody knew what had happened to him since the last letter that he mailed from Vladivostok at the onset of the civil war. After that we used to guess with my father that maybe his brother had emigrated to England, or maybe he'd been arrested as an "enemy of the people" for his counterrevolutionary activities as a Ukrainian nationalist. Now at least we knew that he remained in Russia.

Also during the time when I was taking care of my dying father, we suddenly had a visit from the father of my good friend,

Vadim Kuzenko, with whom I'd enrolled as a volunteer in the White Army and with whom I served in the Fifth Battery of the Artillery Brigade under the command of General Drozdovsky in defending Perekop and Crimea.¹⁰ His father, Yelisyey Ivanovich, recounted that he was returning home after testifying before the GPU in the town of Odessa during the investigation of his son. After a defeat of the Whites in Crimea, Vadim succeeded in escaping abroad, lived for several years in France, and decided to return home with some of his friends on a motorboat from Bulgaria through the Black Sea. They were caught, taken to Odessa, and put in the cellars of the GPU. Their relatives were summoned and interrogated but were not allowed to see the prisoners.

Yelisyey Ivanovich was very upset and told us that now his career on the railway was over, that his days of freedom were running out, and that he could expect any day to hear GPU knocking at his door. He said that as soon as he returned home to Taganrog, his last deed would be to take care of his wife by buying her a small cottage in the country. That was the last time we saw him.¹¹

With the beginning of the school year, I could not devote so much time to my father. The school hours and endless meetings were taking most of my time. In addition, since I already knew Ukrainian, the director of the school sent me to attend evening courses called "Ukrainization for the Teachers." My father understood and resigned himself to my long absences during the days and nights, because he knew that I was not too far away. Even when the meetings ended past midnight, sometimes as late as one or two o'clock in the morning, he knew that, when I returned home, he would hear my voice asking him, "Well, Papa, how did you feel today? Are you tired?" Or I would ask, "Are you resting, Papa? Can I do something for you?" Knowing that I was close by had a calming effect on him, and I was pleased with that. He told me that he was not worrying anymore that Vera would remain alone when he died and that I would take care of his funeral.

Late in the autumn we noticed that every day he was losing his strength, and we stopped our strolls on Sundays. Now he was mostly staying in bed and eating very little. His doctor told us that our father might probably last until February or at the latest

until March. Now all my free time was spent sitting near his bed. I observed him closely and became convinced that the doctor's estimate was right.

At that time, we received a letter from my uncle Pyetr's wife. She was notifying us that he was gravely ill and had been transferred from Feodosia to the railway hospital in the town of Simferopol. Shortly thereafter, we received a telegram that he'd died. Vera and I decided not to tell my father because we didn't want to upset him with this tragic news. Our Aunt Marusya went alone to her brother's funeral and then stopped to visit our father on her way back home. She told us, but not my father, that Boris and Lida had come for the funeral of their father.

In January 1929, the political campaign started for the elections to be held sometime late that spring. These were the elections for all levels of the Soviet government bodies, on the local, district, regional, and central levels. To have a right to vote, all residents were notified about an obligatory registration. I knew that for me this was a very dangerous time, but there was no other solution; I could not leave my sister alone with our dying father and, in order to stay, I had to register myself as a resident of Nikitovka. Shortly after the registration I received a notice from the authorities stating that, as a known former *byelogvardyets*¹² I was deprived of civil and voting rights. Vera and I decided not to tell our dying father and let him be without worries in the last days of his life.

In the beginning I was almost happy about my new status—I was relieved of “the right to be elected” and “the right to vote.” From the point of view of an enemy of the Soviet regime, it looked to me to be an almost excellent solution. Now I didn't have to take part directly or indirectly in the election campaigns, didn't have to raise my hand in the disgusting “voluntary” procedure of being forced to approve the Bolshevik Party lists of candidates. And I felt almost like a normal and morally healthy individual who didn't have the need anymore to pretend all the time that I supported the Soviet regime. It was as if some heavy burden had fallen off my shoulders. I suddenly felt free.

But my happiness was short-lived. The next day I began to see clearly the consequences of being a *lishenyets*.¹³ In the morning, as soon as I came to school, the office clerk came to me and whispered a message in my ear, “Would you please go to see

Mar'ya Petrovna. She has an urgent matter to discuss with you." Being summoned put me on the alert, and I knocked very carefully at the door of the school director.

Mar'ya Petrovna, the former headmistress of the Gymnasium, was now a director of the Seven-Year Trade School. The times had changed. She knew that her position was on shaky ground. As soon as some party member with reasonable qualifications appeared, her old intelligentsia background would become a cause for her dismissal. Therefore, she learned to maneuver between the opposite forces of good and evil and find a middle path to survival in those unsettled times.

Her manner of talking with subordinates depended on the person she was dealing with. Some she greeted with a quiet smile and friendly conversation; others with apparent calmness and a lot of restraint; and with some, she was very strict, though she tried not to be bossy. In the last case, she sat directly in front of the person and always kept her head with the graying hair bent to one side, as if she was deflecting it from a blow that could hit her at any moment.

I knocked carefully the second time. "Enter!" sounded her ringing voice from the office. I opened the door and slowly entered the room. Mar'ya Petrovna was sitting behind her large desk. Over her head hung Lenin's¹⁴ portrait. As I glanced at his sly physiognomy, at that moment, for some unknown reason, it appeared to me that on the forehead of this leader of a world revolution barely visible, little horns were beginning to shoot, and I thought, devil!

"Good morning, Mar'ya Petrovna," I said, coming closer to the desk.

"Good morning, good morning," she saluted me without hiding the annoyance in her voice and started to talk to me showing her nervousness openly, "Sit down, please, Orest Mikhailovich. I don't know where to start... There is trouble... What I am going to do with you? How I am going to tell you this?"

I understood that this was the beginning of the reprisals that I had anticipated and calmly asked her, "Probably, this is in regard to me being deprived of civil rights?"

"Yes, yes, my dear... Yes, yes... You should know... I am now a very small person... Nobody is taking my opinion into

consideration... I can't do anything to help you... It is even difficult to suggest anything... You know yourself, the times have changed... I can only express my sympathy. But how would my sympathy help you?!"

In a calm voice I asked her, "Tell me, Mar'ya Petrovna, but straightforward—what did really happen?"

"Well, you see," she was encouraged by my calm and direct question, "they called me from the *Narobras* early this morning and told me that I should not allow you to continue to teach in school because you are a *lishenyets*. This is terrible, really terrible! You, my dear, will be without work, but we are losing an excellent teacher. These are terrible times. I am afraid for you. It will be very hard for you to find another position. But you may try anyway in *Narobras* to see Sergey Sergyeyevich; he is a very warm-hearted person, and he is a non-party man. He might tell you what to do. Go immediately there—do not delay." And she added emphatically, like trying to encourage me to act, "You know the proverb 'Strike while the iron is hot!'"

I could not explain why, but I listened very calmly to all the "excuses" of poor Mar'ya Petrovna, who continued, "Forgive me for having to tell you such unpleasant news. But the times now are like this, one doesn't know today what to expect for oneself. You understand what I mean?"

Her litany began to annoy me, and I didn't want to look in her face, but lifted my eyes up, above her head, and fixed them on the portrait of the one who was responsible for my troubles. "Yes," I thought, "he is the 'one', the devil himself!" And with this idea in my mind, I pointed my finger to the portrait of Lenin and asked her suddenly, "Why have you hung over your head a portrait of that devil? Do you think that he will bring you happiness? Malevolent spirits have never brought anything good to anybody!"

"What do you mean 'devil'? What are you saying?" She began to worry. "That's a portrait of Lenin!" And almost whispering, she asked me, "Please, for God's sake, don't talk so loud."

But I became calmly sarcastic, "My dear Mar'ya Petrovna, try to look carefully on that diabolic image—look very, very carefully. Do you see what is growing there on his forehead? Those are real horns! Yes, real devil's horns!"

She looked at me with eyes wide open and exclaimed, "My

God! What are you saying?! For God's sake, quickly get out of here! You better go!" Then she added in a more reconciliatory voice, "But don't forget to see Sergey Sergyeyevich. I will call him that you are coming."

Of course, I went to see Sergey Sergeyevich, but I didn't find anything that could console me from him. The old teacher, who was now one of the inspectors of *Narobras*, said to me with regret, "This order comes from *Gorpartcom*.¹⁵ It is not a matter for us to decide. But I wouldn't expect anything good following this order."

I returned home. My sister, who was used to my always coming home late, wondered, "Why are you home so early?"



Mikhail Makarovitch Gladky on his deathbed in his apartment. Station of Nikitovka, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, February 18, 1929.

I told her what had happened, and we decided not to tell our father. He had been so pale and weak in the past few weeks that we had notified both Igor and Anya to be ready for his death. I told him I would stay home from now on to keep him company and to take care of him, and he accepted my explanation without any questions. In the few weeks after this incident, on February 18, 1929, my father died quietly but in full consciousness. Both Vera and I were at his side when he stopped breathing. We immediately sent telegrams to our sister Anya and our cousin

Bonifaty in Taganrog, to our brother Igor in Artyemovsk, and to our Aunt Marusya. All of them arrived the next day.

The day before the funeral, we placed the body of our father in the dining room area of the room on a bunk bed near the window and decorated the background with houseplants. As was customary at that time, we made a photograph of him lying on his deathbed.

The news about my father's death spread quickly in Nikitovka. Many people came to pay their respects, because he was loved and esteemed by many at the station and in the hamlet, as well as in the surrounding communities. They all came to say their last goodbyes to him, the one who had given so much to the community—all his former choristers, friends, railroad employees, and his and our mother's former students. Even the professional union of the railroad workers sent their representatives. One of them was a good friend of my father. He told me that when the secretary of the union, a Bolshevik, sent them to represent the organization at the funeral, he told them with cynicism, "Well, well, comrades, the last 'gentleman' of Nikitovka has died." This was because my father had never gotten used to calling people "comrades" and had continued to use the pre-revolutionary expression of calling them *Gospodyn*, which meant Gentleman.

The funeral was on a cold February day. During the funeral procession the men carried his coffin on their shoulders all the way to the cemetery, which was about one kilometer from our house. Since the church had long been closed by the Soviet authorities and we couldn't find any clergyman to have an Orthodox funeral service, the former church choristers decided to make the funeral worthy of the preceptor of the church choir. At home and during the stops made to change the pallbearers, the choristers sang funeral marches and solemn ecclesiastical hymns. At the cemetery, before lowering the coffin, one former elder of the church improvised a requiescat prayer for the repose of the dead, and the choristers sang a requiem hymn. This outpouring of affection moved many to tears, which nobody tried to hide. They were tears of sorrow for having lost their teacher and friend, and nostalgia for a spiritual need they all missed after the closing of the church.

All of us, my sisters Anya and Vera, my brother Igor and I,

were so grateful to all the friends of our father for the respect and love they showed to him for the last time. It made us feel that in his life he had touched and influenced the lives of so many people, who would cherish memories of him for many years to come.

The funeral of my father kept me so busy that for a while I didn't have time to think about what had happened to me. But afterwards I began to figure out what lay ahead. At that time, being deprived of civil rights meant also to be deprived of the right to work. To find employment here, where everybody knew that I was the *lishenyets*, was now impossible. I knew that for me there was no other solution, but to depart from here as soon as possible, cover up my tracks, conceal the information that the authorities here had deprived me of civil rights, and find work somewhere else.

In theory it was an excellent idea, but in practice it was not so simple. Before moving to another place, one had to remove oneself from the register of military service and from the register of the teachers' professional union. In both cases I was risking that in my documents the infamous word, which would brand me as *lishenyets*, would be posted.

Since I was not the only one in this situation, I contacted my friend who was working at the hamlet of Nikitovka in The Hamlet's Soviet office and who knew what others were doing in such cases. He told me, "To try to do something about it locally does not make any sense. Others have tried it without any results. Those who are in power here are all Bolsheviks and are considering all ex-Whites as the 'enemies of the people.' But I would suggest trying to write a letter to Comrade Petrovsky.¹⁶ He is a very important and powerful Bolshevik. I heard that he has helped some people. Try—maybe you will be lucky. I will give you his exact address."

I wrote a petition to Comrade Petrovsky, in which I explained my situation straightforwardly. I stated that I had indeed been a volunteer in the White Army, but that I considered myself defeated, that I wasn't involved in any anti-Soviet activities, and did not intend to be in the future. I showed my petition to my friend.

He shook his head in disapproval and suggested, "Add reassurance of your admiration and loyalty toward the Soviet

regime.”

I rejected the suggested idea with indignation. I asked him, “Are you considering me as some kind of a reptile? I am already slandering myself by writing that I consider myself defeated! In general, it is horrible to write such declarations—and to whom?!—to the inveterate Bolshevik!”

“Well,” answered my friend, “in that case, it is better you don’t write anything.”

“But what can I do? How can I live from now on? I have to work if I want to eat.” My question remained without an answer.



Vera Mikhailovna Gladkaya in railroad telegrapher uniform. Station of Nikitovka, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1932.



Vera Mikhailovna Gladkaya in her apartment. Station of Nikitovka, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, September 1932.

After the death of my father, my sister remained without any means to sustain her and was trying to sell some remaining household items and furnishings to buy food. However, many of my father's friends were sympathetic to our misfortune and promised to get busy in finding her some work. Indeed, one afternoon the head telegrapher came to our home and told Vera to come the next morning to the telegraph office, where he for some time had been acting as a telegraph master. He helped my father during his illness by placing volunteers to substitute for him. He had informed the stationmaster, who had approved that he should hire a new person in my father's place. He encouraged Vera, "Don't you worry—we will train you in no time!"

Now that Vera was secure in being employed, I had to start thinking about myself. With my credentials of *lishenyets*, I could not return to live with my wife and daughter in the hamlet of Snyezhnoye. I needed time to plan what to do next.

1. See the chapter "Katakombnaya Paskha."

2. See the chapter "It's Time to Go!"
3. *Narobras*—acronym for *Otdyel Narodnogo Obrazovaniya*—Office of People's Education.
4. See the chapter "I Remember My Childhood in Nikitovka."
5. *Gorpromuch*—acronym for *Gorno-Promyshlennoye Uchilishche*—Industrial Mining School.
6. See the chapter "In the Hamlet of Snyezhnoye."
7. See the chapter "Lidka."
8. A small keyboard organ in which the tones are produced by forcing air through metal reeds by means of bellows operated by pedals.
9. See the chapter "Uncle Pavel."
10. See the chapter "White Army Volunteers."
11. See the chapter "Vadim Kuzenko and His Parents."
12. Member of the White Guard, a name coined by the Bolsheviks for anybody who served in the White Army.
13. An individual who is deprived of civil rights.
14. Revolutionary leader of the Bolshevik faction during the Russian Revolution of 1918.
15. *Gorpartcom*—acronym for *Gorodskoy Partiyiny Komitet*—The Town Party's Committee.
16. The authenticity of the name could not be confirmed.



Easter in the Catacombs

By Orest M. Gladky

After my father's death, in the weeks following delivery of notices about being deprived of civil rights to the selected residents of Nikitovka by the Soviet authorities, my sister Vera came home from the market with troublesome news every day, "They have arrested Kopeykin, and the son of Vasily Ivanovich... Also, Gleb has disappeared..." Each of them like me was a *lishenyets*. From then on when my sister would go to the market she would lock me in the house. But coming home she was bringing more bad news, "Turchyk was arrested, and the son of Valentina Alexandrovna... Also, they have taken Petrenko."¹

Each day the situation became more troubling. We traced a pattern of arrests and found out that all arrests were done, for some unknown reason, during the day and that those who were arrested were mostly people who had served in the White Army that fought the Reds. We decided that until I made my decision of what I would do next, I would leave the house during the day and come home late at night.

I began to get up very early in the morning, take a piece of bread with me, and walk out of the house when there was not a soul on the streets. I walked far from the hamlet, where there were no people who could recognize me and whom I had started to mistrust. There, in the midst of fields and meadows that were just starting to awaken from a long winter, between gullies filled with fresh streams, and coppices beginning to awake from the warmth of spring, I passed my time until it began to get dark, and only then did I return home. I especially liked to visit a place called Krynychka, which had been a popular place for outings for the hamlet's people in the past.

Krynychka was situated in a wide and deep valley with five steep banks meeting there, and in the bottom was a small lake surrounded by bushes and trees. Some time in the past a little dam had been made from which the overflowing water formed a

pleasantly-sounding waterfall. Here, sitting near the water and listening to its harmonious sounds, I was listening to the music of time, not the present, but the past. I lived there with my memories.

There were other beautiful waterfalls cascading over the steep banks. One of the best was at the last bank, where on the stone ledges the murmuring stream broke into thousands of minute sprays as the water splashed to the bottom and formed snow-white foam. The running water and its sounds were endless and calming to my soul.

Above this most beautiful spectacle of nature, almost at the end of one of the banks among the big boulders, ledges, crevices, and gaps, was a large slightly inclined plane. There, before the revolution, was a big apiary where the people from all surrounding areas, including our family, purchased honey for the whole winter. I remember going there many times with my father. I saw that it was now abandoned, and I ventured to explore what had once been a friendly-looking place.

When I got up there I found that it barely resembled what it used to be. All the beehives had disappeared, and tall grass and bushes had grown up between the stone slabs, hiding the remaining refuge carved in a stone ledge. I remembered that in the spring and summer the beekeeper had lived here. He had been known to all simply by the name Dyed Korney, or Old Man Korney.

I entered and could still recognize what once had been white walls but were now darkened with the dust of time. Near the window stood a table carved from stone. In the middle of the table used to stand a big bucket with honey for sale. Now there were only some kitchen utensils scattered on it: an old tin teapot, a few tea cups, several empty glass jars that probably were once used for storage of honey, a plate and a wooden spoon, all of it intact but covered with a thick layer of dust. Near the table were three benches made from flat stone slabs placed on top of upright stones. On the opposite wall was a primitive stove, also made from carved stones rather than from the commonly used bricks. There Dyed Korney had cooked his meals. Farther away stood a small wooden platform bed where he had slept. Part of this refuge was allotted for keeping the bees during the wintertime, and now it was an empty space.

My father had told me the story about what happened to Dyed Korney and his apiary. It happened at dawn early in the spring of 1921, when a Bolshevik detachment from a battalion fighting the banditry came to the apiary and demanded all honey that Dyed Korney could collect from the beehives.

Dyed Korney tried to convince them that this early in the spring one could not collect anything, because there was no honey yet. But the commander of the detachment decided that the old man did not want to give them his honey and started to destroy one beehive after another. To cover up their blunder, they shot Dyed Korney in the head right in the middle of his apiary, where he was found after several days. There was no investigation as there would have been in the old days, and the murderers were never found. The commander in charge of the detachment fighting with the banditry had reported that bandits had destroyed the apiary and killed Dyed Korney. But the people who saw some of the bee stings on the faces and hands of the men from that detachment knew who'd committed the crime.

Now the tall grass and bushes hid this hideous crime, which the authorities were trying to bury in the past. Knowing this, I thought that this place should be relatively safe while the terrible story was still fresh in the people's minds, especially of those who committed the crime.

Indeed, I passed all my time alone in this quiet place, and nobody disturbed me. I would sit or lie in the tall grass listening to the music of spring and think, think and think. Past and present were mixed together, but all I could think was, "How can I find a solution to my situation?" And the situation was becoming more and more complicated, because every night when I returned home, my sister would tell me new cases of people—known and unknown to me—who were either arrested or had disappeared from their homes.

Easter was nearing. These were the last days of the Great Lent. But there was no great anticipation of the holiday as there had been in the past. The churches were closed, the bells were removed. But the people preserved their faith in the Almighty in the depths of their souls.

A few days before Easter Sunday, my solitude was interrupted. I was sitting as usual near the water, where its sound did not allow me to hear the carefully placed footsteps. Suddenly

somebody touched my shoulder. I was startled and turned to see who it was. A very old man with a long white beard stood in front of me.

"What are you doing here?" he asked me in Ukrainian.

"I am hiding from the people," I answered straightforward.

"Don't you say that! People would not harm you," he replied in a soft voice.

"They have already done so, Grandfather!"

"Maybe you didn't do something right to somebody," he said.

"Who, me?" I wondered.

"Maybe you have done harm to somebody," he insisted.

"Why would I do harm to anybody?" I wondered again.

"Well, aren't there many kinds of people in this world? All are different. There are those who are doing only good, and there are those who do bad things. That depends on what is written in their destiny," he explained with common folk wisdom.

"Well, old man, I had no reason to harm anybody. You see, I was treated badly by the authorities." I gave him a clue to my problem.

"That's how it is! You say 'the authorities'? My dear, you think those are the authorities?" he asked me like he knew a better answer to that question.

To which I replied quickly, "Of course, they are! If they are sitting in high places and are ruling the country, they are the authorities!"

"My dear young man! What kind of authority is that? I will tell you, there is in this world the authority given by God, and then there is the other one imposed by the devil. You see, we had the Emperor Nikolay Alexandrovich, whom God gave the authority to rule. But those... How are they called now, those who took the power from him? It's a sin only to pronounce their name! Well, they are placed here by the devil. Do you understand?" he explained this complicated idea in very simple terms.

"All this I know very well, old man," I replied.

"Then what else do you need? Just live the rest of your life as a Christian, I mean, as it is written in the Scriptures. Be good to others and love thy neighbor," he preached to me.

"I know this very well," I said, "but what has one to do if they don't let you live? You see, they fired me from my work, and now I have no way to live," I complained.

"My dear young man, you should not sit here and wait. Do as it is written in the Scriptures: 'Get away from the evil and create goodwill.' So, you should do the same. Why are you sitting here? Get away from here, because here for you is only evil. You understand?" he continued to teach me his old wisdom.

And I tried to explain to him, "This I also know, old man, but it is not so easy to leave here! You know, we, the young people, are all registered..."

He interrupted me, "In Satan's notebook! I know, I know. But you, my dear, get to them with the Scriptures, and they will flinch away from you! Get to them with the words of God, because they are scared of His words more than anything else!"

"No, old man," I told him in resignation, "you cannot understand me! Are you from the village?"

The old man shook his head and smiled, "Ah, you! It doesn't matter that you are from the town and are educated, but you think worse than me, the illiterate peasant! My friend, that's just it—I understand you, but I see that you don't understand me. Tell me, my dear, what kind of day is ahead of us?"

"Well, old man, Easter is approaching. But it brings us very little joy," I told him with a forlorn tone in my voice.

But he admonished me, "Don't say such things, my dear, don't take a sin upon your soul. Isn't this a joy, ah, the Easter Sunday? You, educated young man, for you your own wounds are hurting more than anything else! Christ will be risen on Sunday! And what can be more joyful for people than the resurrection of Christ?"

I understood what the old man was trying to tell me and told him that I sincerely regretted all the bitter things that I had told him.

To this the old man replied in a conciliatory voice, "Well, that's it, my dear. You see, that's why I asked you about it, to know you better. You yourself told me that there is no more joy!"

Then he asked, "Well, do you know why I came here?"

"No, Grandfather, I don't know," I answered, puzzled by his question.

"Well, how should I tell you this? Our church was shut down," he began to explain and stopped for a moment like he was still not sure if he could trust me.

"I know this," I answered and asked him, "But, what

happened to Father Gregory? Where is he now?"

The old man's face brightened up, "Do you know him?"

"Of course, he was my father's friend," I answered proudly.

"Well listen: Father Gregory is working in the coal mines."

"In the coal mines?!" I exclaimed with surprise.

"He is saving his life for all of us sinners. He doesn't want to leave us, the members of God's flock. He visits us occasionally and performs a church service. Last Sunday was his day off. He should come to consecrate Easter. He would perform the Easter Sunday service."

The old man paused for a while, collecting his thoughts and then explained, "That's why I came here. To prepare this place here, I mean to prepare everything here for this Sunday. You see, the road leading here is forbidden for the Bolsheviks, at least for a while, because they killed our old man here."

I inserted quickly, "I know—Dyed Korney!"

"You mean, you know this, too?" exclaimed the old man. "Who are you? Tell me!"

When I told him about my family and myself, I felt that he finally did not doubt me, because it turned out that he knew my father and even me, in those days when I was a small boy.

"Well, listen," he told me, "our muzhiks decided to celebrate this Easter the old way. We don't have the church now, but... What you can do? This matter is remediable. The matter is not a building, but the faith of the people. A religious service could be performed anywhere, even under the open sky. But we decided to have it here because everything looks almost like at Calvary—we even have a Gethsemane Garden. We have already notified Father Gregory; he will be here at midnight before Easter Sunday. That's why muzhiks have decided to make everything here as it should be—put it all in order and clean it up. And that's why I came here—to make a surveillance."

"You have put a lot of thought into planning all this," I approved their ideas. "I can help you, because I have nothing else to do now. I am free as a bird!"

"Then get up," said the old man, "and let's go and see where and what we should do here."

I got up and we went to inspect the wrecked apiary. The old man walked unhurriedly and kept talking, "Here were my beehives... Those bees were God's creatures... What a place it

was here! How much honey was collected here!"

Then his reflections became more spiritual as he told them aloud, "And Dyed Korney occupied himself with beekeeping for a good reason... Because you see, old people need to devote some time to earn forgiveness of their sins. He would sit here alone with the bees. It is obvious that he could not hold any discussions with them, but in his mind, he had clear thoughts, as pure as the air here. So, the old sinner would sit here, praise God and ask for God's forgiveness for all his sins and transgressions... And the bees were also praying for him. And life for the old man became easier because in this place God himself could see that he was living the righteous life." After a while he added, "Now we have no place to save ourselves at an old age, because, you see, my dear, the comrades don't want us to collect honey!"

"Well, Grandfather, salvation is possible without honey, too," I suggested.

"No, young man, you see, a bee is a God's creature. She collects both the honey and the wax in her hive. For men she provides honey, and for God she gives the wax for the candles as a gift. Now can you understand that she does holy work?"

"I understand, but I still believe that salvation could be earned not only at the apiary. Though it is peaceful here, and it is true—it invites you to reflect."

Making our way through the tall grass, we came into Dyed Korney's stone house, and the old man's conversation became of a practical nature, "Well, now, let us see what needs to be done up here. We will pray in here; therefore, it needs to be cleaned thoroughly. Let us see what kind of tools we would need: axes, shovels, and brooms. The women shall paint the walls with whitening and will clean up inside. Here, we will make the altar; here, the right choir; and here, the left choir."

Then he looked outside and commented, "But how could we go with a procession around our church if it is carved in a ledge? Could it be that we will have to climb over that big rock? Somebody could notice us up there. We have to think well ahead of time. The people will gather... everything needs to be all right..." And he added with a smile, "Maybe even some party member shall drop in here. You know, some of them also want to pray to God."

"You mean you have those, too?" I asked.

"Well," said the old man, "what can you do with the muzhik who yielded to the temptation of having a Bolshevik party membership card, but still remembers God? Of course, their superiors should not notice it. Do you think that faith can be snatched so easily out of one's soul? Although many are party members, they were still christened. So they are trying to get away from their Antichrist. Well, we allow them to come to us, as long as it is done with a pure heart..."

I wondered if this was an exceptional case and bombarded him with questions, "Tell me, old man, did you have such services before? Do the Bolshevik party members always attend them? Does Father Gregory always perform these services?"

"Wait a little, not so fast," he stopped me. "Everything we do is as it should be done by Orthodox Christians. Services are held in the right order. Father Gregory comes when he can, and when he cannot, he sends someone who can perform the service, you know, the monks, who are also in the mines digging coal..."

After a short pause he added, "Well, as far as the party members, those are our stupid muzhiks. They were greedy for what they could get free. As Bolshevik party members they could get all kinds of privileges—they pay lower taxes, and they can shop in the party cooperative for all kinds of goods that we mortals have no right to dream about. But they haven't forgotten God and still attend our services."

While the old man was inspecting the apiary and what needed to be done by the Saturday night before Easter, he continued to tell me about their secret church. "Of course, we are careful about how we conduct our services. Our church is mobile—one week we gather at Vlasov's house, the next week, at the Potap's, the week after that at somebody else's. That's necessary, so authorities won't notice anything. You know, they are very strict about the secret church services. But what else can we do if muzhik cannot live without prayer? They long to go to church and pray all together."

"But those who are party members," I wondered, "don't they betray you?"

"How can they do that without giving themselves away?" he answered with a question.

"Maybe they come to find out who is coming and then report them to the authorities?" I speculated.

The old man admitted, "Well, it could also happen that way—we thought about that, too. But we have all kinds of precautions. Not everybody can join our little church. Thank God, until now everything has been all right."

"How do you know what kind of intentions one has who is joining you? Maybe one who has intentions to inform just creeps into your church," I insisted.

"You know even Christ did not escape the betrayal of Judas Iscariot," answered the old man. "And who are we? Of course, anything could happen. There are all kinds of men in this world."

"But, if this happens, all of you shall suffer!" I insisted.

But the old man answered calmly and wisely, "Christ suffered for all of us. Why should we be afraid to suffer for ourselves?"

I replied, "The times now are such..."

But he interrupted me, "The times now are like they were for the first Christians. Father Gregory told us how the first believers were tortured and killed. Until now God had preserved us from these kinds of sufferings. And, if it should happen, what can we do? We shall accept those sufferings, as any Christian would for his faith."

Then, suddenly he remembered, "We talk too much! There is a job that has to be done quickly—the holiday is nearing. Everything needs to be done on time. In the afternoon I will send the muzhyks here to clear up the grass. And I will send the women, too, to paint the walls with whitening, so we can welcome the Holy Sunday in the bright house..."

This encounter with the old man happened on Thursday, and I came every day to lend a hand in clearing the place around the house. By Saturday one could not recognize the place. The space in front of the house was cleared up, bushes were cut down, and grass was pulled out. The broken glass in the windows was replaced, and inside of Dyed Korney's house everything was clean and bright. Opposite the entrance door an altar was erected that was surrounded with greenery; the arch was made out of hand-woven linen cloth, and the right and left choir places were marked on the floor with chalk.

Toward evening the old man came to inspect everything and was pleased with the work. "Well, that's how it should be," he said. "Now we shall celebrate the Holy Easter, as is the custom for all Orthodox Christian people, with prayer and rejoicing together."

And, as it should be in Orthodox tradition, all food that each *baba*¹ has prepared will be brought here to be blessed: Easter cakes, *paskhas*² and *krashenky*.³ God did not forget us this year, and we should not forget Him. The time now is such that the man becomes like a beast. Too many now don't think about God."

He looked at me and added, "These are bad times, and nobody knows how one will die. You see, Dyed Korney lived here, and he lived here as if in paradise. His time came, and he died a martyr's death. They killed him for no reason at all. Poor man never said one bad word to anybody, but they took his life. And for what reason? Even now the muzhyks remember him and ask themselves, 'Why?' and 'Who?' The authorities should give the answer, but we aren't supposed to question the authorities—you know that yourself."

When the old man was satisfied with the inspection, he said, "Well, now I have to hurry. Father Gregory lives quite far from the village. I have to send a cart for him on time. Then I have to notify some more people about the service. I still have enough to do for today! I need to run to the village." The old man started down at a jog-trot toward the road.

I decided to go home while it was still daylight to tell my sister to get ready for the unusual Easter service that was waiting for us. In a half-hour I was home. Though it was hard to find foodstuff, Vera managed to prepare a small *paskha* and make a few colored Easter eggs. She put this and a piece of lard and salt in two small bundles made from napkins, as it was traditional to bring them to be blessed in the church.

Before midnight we quietly came out of the house and went to the road leading to Krynychka. Because we had to walk almost all the way downhill, we reached the improvised church very quickly.

When we came closer, we felt that something unusual was going on. An aureole of faint light was visible in the direction of the apiary, and a restrained sound of voices was mixed with the sound of waterfalls. When we entered the apiary of Dyed Korney, a beautiful pre-Easter view opened up in front of us—the improvised church was shining with candlelight, and it was full of people, but most of the praying folks were standing outside. From the church we could hear the voice of Father Gregory, which I recognized right away. He started to bless the food that

everybody had brought with them. After that he began the service. My sister and I found a space in the courtyard where we could see some of the inside of the church, hear Father Gregory saying the prayers and the subdued singing of the choir. We abandoned ourselves to the prayers.

Once in a while, the old man who organized this festivity came outside, climbed somewhere up in the dark, and then returned. I found out later that there was an observation post and that the old man was making a change in observers to give everybody a chance to participate in the service. I didn't escape this duty and performed it as best I could, watching carefully in the dark and listening to each suspicious rustle, but, thanks to God, nobody from the authorities knew about our secret Easter service, and all went well.

With the sunrise the choir, without restraint, sounded a powerful "*Khristos voscresye!*"⁴ and people with tears in their eyes responded, "*Vo istyenu voskryesye!*"⁵ They kissed each other and wished each other the great Holy Day, according to the tradition of the Orthodox Church.

Joyful and happy in our hearts, peaceful and contented, we returned home with the blessed *paskha*, eggs, lard, and salt. It was indeed a real Easter, though the service was held secretly like that of the early Christians in the catacombs.

1. Ukrainian word for a woman.

2. Special Easter cake.

3. Decorated Easter eggs (in Ukrainian).

4. "The Christ is risen!"—Russian Orthodox Easter greetings.

5. "Indeed He is risen!"—Russian Orthodox reply to Easter greetings.



Uncle Pavel

As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky

After I was deprived of my civil rights and was discharged from my employment at the Seven-Years Trade School in Nikitovka, and shortly before my father's death, we received from my Uncle Pavel a very short letter without any details. In it he wrote a conventional phrase notifying my father, "I am alive, in good health and hope it's the same with all of you." This was followed by another carefully worded phrase, "Please write to me, if it is possible for you." And it was signed simply, "Your Pavel." On the envelope was his return address from Vladivostok. It was very surprising for us to receive such a short and simply worded letter from my Uncle Pavel, who used to always write such detailed and interesting letters as if they were masterpieces of literature. But we assumed that he probably wanted to be careful for our sake, just in case some of his past could be harmful to us.

My father was very happy to find out that his youngest brother was alive and well, because the last two long letters that we received from him were, one from Manchuria and another one from Vladivostok, at the onset of the civil war. But since then we had not heard any news from him, and nobody knew what had happened to him.

Occasionally we guessed with my father that maybe his brother had returned to China, or maybe even emigrated to England, since he had many connections abroad and knew both Chinese and English very well. Sometimes we imagined the worst scenario, that he was arrested as the "enemy of the people," because before the revolution he was in the civil service. He was appointed by the Russian government as an interpreter of the Judicial Court of the Eastern-Chinese Railway, which prosecuted the gangs of Chinese railroad robbers, called *khunkhusy*.

We were thinking, "Maybe they were considered now to be the *comrades khunkhusy*, or even revolutionary heroes, who robbed the Imperial railways. Who knows?... Maybe they were fighting

for the worldwide revolution and were guided by Lenin himself. Who knows? After all, it was well known and was not only condoned but also applauded as a heroic deed, that one of the Bolshevik leaders, Dzhugashvily-Stalin himself, robbed the Imperial post office to support the revolution!"

But most of all, we speculated that my Uncle Pavel had probably been arrested for his counter-revolutionary activities as a Ukrainian nationalist, whom the Bolsheviks considered to be the enemies of Soviet power. We thought about this because in Uncle Pavel's last letter after the revolution he wrote with many details about himself and about his dreams and expectations for the new, free Ukraine. He wrote that it was one of the reasons for his return to the native land from his residency at the town of Kharbin in Manchuria.

He settled down in Vladivostok, which at that time and for several years thereafter was governed by Whites. He opened a photo studio there and got married. In Vladivostok Uncle Pavel belonged to the Ukrainian government-in-exile, called *Zeleny Klyn*,¹ which was established there. We were not surprised about that, because he always was an outspoken and deep-rooted Ukrainian nationalist and firmly believed in an independent Ukraine. In that letter he was very enthusiastic about the golden opportunity at that time of great confusion in the country for the "quick liberation of Ukraine from Russian domination." This last letter from Vladivostok was full of nationalistic hope for Ukrainian independence and was definitely a great piece of anti-Bolshevik writing.

Soon after I returned from Crimea, my father and I re-read all the correspondence from Uncle Pavel while he was in Kharbin and his last letter from Vladivostok. He was a good writer, and he shared with us many fascinating episodes from his life and described the exotic places he had been to and seen, and he mailed many postcards from Manchuria with pictures of Chinese art and architecture.

He also wrote about the atrocities of the *khunkhusy*, how they attacked the trains and killed passengers and railroad employees. He described how he assisted as an official interpreter for the Russian government in the trials of the *khunkhusy* and how he had to translate the verdicts of capital punishment to the condemned.

After reading them all, my father and I decided that this was

pretty heavy counter-revolutionary material that could be used as evidence if found in our home, and it could put us all in trouble with the new Bolshevik authorities. Therefore, we burned all the letters and postcards, leaving only the envelope from the last letter with my uncle's address. We thought that we would sleep better at night by not having this material lying around the house.

When we received Uncle Pavel's short letter, I was surprised and even felt sorry for him that he'd lost such an opportunity to escape or to remain abroad. But under the latest circumstances in my life, his letter came as a rescue. Because of my new stigma of *lishenyets*, I could not return to live with my wife and daughter right away. This was probably a God-sent way out to cover one's tracks a long way from home far in the East.

I immediately wrote a letter to my uncle Pavel notifying him about his father's, my father's and Uncle Pyetr's deaths. And I told him that, because of the unexpected circumstances, I needed to find employment in Vladivostok. My uncle probably understood what kind of "need" it was and wrote me right back.

"My dear nephew, yes, you may come here, although you should know that life here is not a mellow-chimed harmony. But people here live no worse than elsewhere in the country, and employment is easy to find. However, on your way here, you should stop in Novosibirsk at my wife's Aunt Anastasia's and try your luck there first. It is closer to home! Write to me from there. Good luck. Uncle Pavel."

My friends suggested that I cross off my name from the military and residence registers by writing as my destination the vague phrase "In search of work," instead of the required exact name of the place where I was going.

I sent a telegram to my wife with our coined phrase for such occasions: "It's time to go! Wait for my new address." Then I prepared my bags and said "goodbye" to my sister Vera. I decided to depart late in the evening with the last train that would connect to the main rail line going East, and I bought the ticket only to that point. Since my first preoccupation was not to encounter anybody who knew me in Nikitovka, I waited at the far end of the platform and boarded one of the last cars of the train.

As the train started to move, I tried in the semi-darkness of the nightlights to find a place to accommodate myself. The car was full of sleeping passengers; the air was heavy and stuffy from

tobacco smoke, sweat, and people's breathing. After the fresh air on the station platform, I felt nauseated. One young mother with two small children sleeping beside her on the bench made room for me by pulling their heads onto her knees. I looked at the other bench in the compartment and saw some old, sleeping people dressed in peasant clothing. *It is safe*, I thought and, trying not to wake up the children, carefully sat on the bench and put my small bag on my knees.

For a long time, I couldn't sleep. Thousands of thoughts were coming to my mind. Here I was, again running away. The past, like a dark shadow, was running after me; even in the night I could not escape from it—the dark shadow was everywhere. I was thinking that before I reached Vladivostok I had a long journey ahead of me, with many changes of trains, waiting for connections, sleeping in railroad station waiting rooms, and plenty of time to contemplate.

After changing trains to the one going East, I waited impatiently until it crossed the Ural Mountains; then I felt a great relief. I thought, "Siberia is a vast country—they cannot catch me here." And I made the rest of my journey to Novosibirsk like a new man who had suddenly lost a big weight he had been carrying on his shoulders for a long time.

As soon as I arrived at the steps of the home of Aunt Anastasia, she gave me a telegram from my Uncle Pavel, stating only: "Wait for my letter." Shortly after, a letter arrived. It was not from my uncle, but from his wife. She was writing straightforwardly, in plain words: "One night, comrades *Gepeushniki*² came into our home and grabbed your uncle. Stay put, and don't try to come to Vladivostok. I am uncertain myself about my future."

Well, I was not moving, waiting for further instructions. Aunt Anastasia was feeding me. While waiting for further instructions, I found temporary work playing piano to accompany the old silent movie pictures. It didn't pay much, but nobody asked me to register or show any documents.

After several weeks another letter arrived from my uncle's wife. She wrote: "Your uncle received a sentence of ten years of hard labor. His photo studio was seized and declared the property of the state cooperative. I am out of work." Then another letter arrived, where she wrote that my uncle had been deported

to Solovky.³

Well, in those days, Solovky was known as the place to which all Whites were deported. And there were stories going around about that place... They were saying that even the climate there was *byelogvardyeisky*⁴, and the sea was also called White. And, believe it or not, even the animals were showing their White political convictions, having only white fur—white bears, white rabbits, and white foxes, and some were saying that even the birds had white feathers! It looked like the entire region was populated with counter-revolutionaries. Only the guards were Red, and that was to prevent the birds, animals, and deported humans from organizing their own independent White state.

Finally, I received one more letter in which my uncle's wife wrote that Uncle Pavel had been transferred to the place called Medvezh'ya Gora, that's on the hard land of the Siberian continent. But the most important news was that he was given a promotion—they appointed him a *Lyekpom*,⁵ as they called a medical assistant.

I started to reason, "Medical Assistant? How could it be? I know very well that Uncle Pavel never had any medical training. At the Institute of Eastern Languages, they did not even study human anatomy." And I became full of admiration: "How talented my uncle Pavel is. He knows how to play violin and piano; he knows how to sculpt; he can paint beautiful landscapes with oil or watercolor; he wrote and illustrated a booklet about Chinese art, and another about Chinese music; he learned the ancient and modern languages—he has excellent knowledge of English and Chinese and, of course, of his own Russian and Ukrainian. And now it looks like he has suddenly acquired medical knowledge! God willing, after his ten-year sentence is over, he will have a degree in medicine! You know, ten years is a long term to study a new profession."

Then I thought, "Of course, it shouldn't be too difficult to give medical treatment to the 'enemies of the people.' What could it involve? Maybe the guards beat somebody hard to either break one's legs, or arms, or spine, or to disfigure... Well, that's nothing—it could not even be called an illness..."

After some more reasoning about my uncle, I came to a more optimistic conclusion: "Thank God. After all, he is alive; they didn't shoot him. And he is healing the 'enemies of the people.'

And what's more, he provides a helpful hand for the well-being of the unfortunate people, alleviates their suffering, and washes their wounds. One can say that he carries out in everyday life the teachings of Christ..."

Since my move to Vladivostok was now out of the question, it was time for me to move from Novosibirsk. I decided to go back to Ukraine and seek employment somewhere in Donbas⁶, closer to my family. I did miss them very much.

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1. Green Field.
 2. Popular name for GPU agents.
 3. Popular name for deportation camps for political prisoners on the Solovyetsky Islands.
 4. An adjective from the name of White Guard.
 5. *Lyekpom*—acronym for *Lyekarsky pomoshchnyk*—medical assistant.
 6. Donets Basin region.



The Last Encounter

By Orest M. Gladky

When I arrived from Novosibirsk¹ to my native Ukraine, I decided first to look for work in the town of Taganrog, where my sister Anya and my cousin Bonifaty lived. I decided that I would not stop to see my sister Vera in Nikitovka, although I had to travel through it, because it was too dangerous for me to show myself there after I had escaped from there after being declared as a *lishenyets*. Since then, every time I had to travel through the railway station of Nikitovka, I was afraid of being recognized as a White Army volunteer. I was afraid to return to the hamlet where I was born and where I lived during my childhood and my youth and for short periods of time following my return from Crimea after the defeat of the White Army.

Usually, before arriving at the station in Nikitovka, I would climb on the upper sleeping shelf of a car compartment and, turning my face toward the back wall, would pretend that I was asleep. At the station in Nikitovka, the trains stood a long time waiting for the connecting-train passengers. I was on the alert all the time, listening to the voices of the newly arriving passengers. I had only one wish—not to encounter anyone who knew my past and me.

The truth is, at the bottom of my soul, I wanted to jump out of the car and run to the native places, to my father's home, to encounter my sister Vera, my childhood and school friends, my neighbors, and my acquaintances. But I couldn't do this because I was a political outlaw. Anyone who served faithfully and loyally the new Bolshevik regime could have reported me to the GPU immediately, and I would be arrested on the spot in the railroad car, in the station, on the street, in the market, in the house, or in the store. Such was the law at that time. But I wanted to live free and had to calm down all my desires and quietly lie on the hard-sleeping shelf, remembering my beautiful past, my childhood, and youth passed in this small hamlet.

That's what happened this time when I was traveling to the town of Taganrog. The train was nearing Nikitovka. I climbed to the upper sleeping shelf, turned my face toward the wall, and closed my eyes.

The train stopped. I was listening to the voices of the new passengers and thinking, "How did it happen that I cannot reveal myself to the people I know?" And the answer was clear as God's day, "Because I have been byelogvardyeyets!² Because I am the enemy of the Bolsheviks! Because I fought against them with weapons in my hands! Because I went voluntarily into the White Army! Because in this small hamlet everybody knew all about it! Am I remorseful that this happened? No! I was the enemy of the Bolsheviks, remained the same now, and will be the same until the end of my days on this earth. But I want to live, and for this reason I have to avoid encounters with all those who know my past."

Suddenly, I heard a familiar voice. My heart trembled. "That's her!" I had to use my willpower to keep myself from jumping down from the sleeping shelf. But I had no doubts in my mind. "It's her, my very trusted, very best, closest friend from my childhood and youth. A friend, from whom I had no secrets, as she never had anything to hide from me!" Now she was in my car compartment, asking the passengers, "Is this place taken?"

Of course, it was her voice! And now inside of me all turned upside down. And in my mind, I was making arguments with myself: "What should I do? Should I reveal myself to her?" The answer was clear: "Of course! There could not be any doubt! What could have changed in our relationship? Well, we didn't see each other for a few years. So, what? If she had a chance to get married during this time, this could not affect our friendship! It was not love that was binding us, but only genuine friendship. And, after all, she was always so nice, so good. She couldn't forget our sincere friendship, the beginning of which I don't even remember, maybe from the time we wore diapers..."

I had an impulse to jump down from the shelf, but... Again, the doubts were stopping me: "And, if she is...? No, no, it is impossible! Why impossible? Well, the times have changed, and the people have changed! And how much they have changed! Some of the best became the worst, and some of the worst became the best... But she was a white bone and a blue blood... No, no, it

is impossible that she has changed!"

The train moved. I couldn't resist any more and jumped down from the top shelf, "Varya! Is it you?"

Amazed to see me, she looked coldly at me with her blue eyes, and I felt something alien and strange in her voice as she asked, "A-a-a... Is it you, Orest?"

"Are you surprised?" I asked.

"Y-e-es... I am surprised." Then she smiled, and that something alien and strange that I heard in her voice passed swiftly and disappeared instantly in her smile. She became friendly and attentive and said to me, "Well, sit down near me. Tell me, how many years, how many winters!"

"Yes, Varya, for quite a long time we haven't seen each other," I agreed. "You probably had time to get married."

"Oh, no!" she replied quickly.

I smiled and jokingly said, "Were you waiting for me?"

"No, no!" she exclaimed, and her voice sounded icy and again somewhat alien and strange. But in a while her nicety returned to her, and she said, "After all, between us there was nothing more than a friendship. Isn't this true?"

"Of course," I agreed with her, "but I saw that you looked scared to see me."

"No, I am not timorous," she replied.

"I know that. But so many changes have taken place."

"In me?" she asked.

"Yes, in you, Varya."

"I have grown up, became smarter," she replied.

"You have never been stupid." I said it as a compliment.

"Do you visit your family often?" she asked suddenly.

"Sometimes," I replied somewhat reluctantly and vaguely.

"I never hear about it when I come to Nikitovka," she said this with a strange tone in her voice, like implying that she should have known it for some reason. Then, changing again to her sweet voice, she asked me, "Where are you going now?"

"To Taganrog," I answered simply.

"I am going there, too," she said and asked me again, "Are you working there?"

"No, I want to visit my cousin," I said, telling her the truth and asked, "And you?"

"I work there," she replied. "Sometimes I come here to visit

my mother." Then she asked again, "And where do you live?"

I faltered because at that time I had no residence and no job. "You see, I am looking for work."

"But you live somewhere?" she insisted.

"In Kharkov," I answered, picking randomly the name of the city and feeling that I should justify my reason. "You see, I don't like the big city. I want to see how things are now in Taganrog."

"It is a nice town," she said, "I like it."

"I like it, too," I replied, "maybe it is because we studied there." Then I felt the need to change direction in our conversation and asked her, "By the way, what is in my gymnasium now?"

"In the Alexander the First, the Blessed?" She pronounced its name with irony in her voice. I didn't understand her irony this time. Then she answered proudly, "Now it is a military school."

"And what is in your Maryinsky Gymnasium?" I asked.

She replied again as if she were pleased with the change of name, "Now it is called a Railway School."

Our conversation stopped short. The questions were becoming too close to the past, which I was reluctant to talk about in the train with all kinds of passengers around us. In my soul I was glad that the silence had set in and was grateful to Varya for her, as it seemed to me, tactfulness. I felt that the old bond of understanding each other's thoughts was still intact.

Until the end of our voyage, we occasionally exchanged some empty, short, or monosyllable remarks and, only before arriving at Taganrog, when liveliness took over all the passengers, Varya began to talk about all the changes that had taken place in town during the time I was not there.

Finally, the train stopped, and we walked out to the platform. Varya asked me, "May I visit you?"

"Of course, I will be very happy to see you again," I answered sincerely.

"Then give me your address where you will be staying," she replied. "Maybe I will try to see you if I find the time."

"Good," I said. We entered the railway station, and I gave her the address of my cousin Bonifaty.

"May I also visit you?" I asked her.

"No, it is inconvenient. I live in a woman's dormitory and don't want any gossip."

We said goodbye. When I exited to Nikolayevsky Street, an elegant carriage went by at full speed. It seemed to me that I saw Varya sitting in it. A somewhat unpleasant feeling came over me, but it quickly dissipated. I turned to Gogolevsky Alley and to Petrovsky Street, where I encountered my comrade from gymnasium, *Sashen'ka*, as we called Sasha, whose full name was Alexander, who was hurrying to work. He offered to share with me a bottle of wine that night. "We will remember the good old days!" he said, saluted me, and ran away.

I spent the day with my cousin Bonifaty. The present was sad, and we talked about the old days, which, against the background of the Soviet reality were especially beautiful. In the evening I went to visit my friend.

Sashen'ka and I spent the night reminiscing about the days of our youth. With the bottle of wine, our conversation was flowing really easily. Besides, in our school days, there were no dark and stormy clouds. We parted in the morning when he had to go to work. Only then I mentioned to him about my volunteering in the White Army and the consequences it had had on my life.

"Well, let's hope that the dark clouds clear up," he encouraged me at parting, "and, as the night slowly becomes a day, the sky shall become bright, and the sun will shine again over you!"

"I hope that we shall see each other again soon," I replied.

I returned to my cousin's home and was surprised to see the confusion, the fear, and the nervousness that were reigning in his family.

"What happened?" I asked him.

"Are you asking us what happened? Are you crazy! You have let us down!" my cousin exploded in accusations. "To whom did you give our address stating that you are staying here?" Then he ordered me, "For God's sake, get out of here immediately!"

"Wait," I said, "please explain to me what happened here."

"What happened?!" exclaimed my cousin. "You have a nerve to ask! Last night the GPU—you know that's the State Political Administration, the successor to CheKa—came here to arrest you! They conducted a search and dug everywhere. They were asking where you were staying overnight."

"What did you tell them?" I asked him.

"I told them that I didn't know."

"Who came?" I asked him again.

"Are you so naive? Don't you know who is coming at night?" replied my cousin angrily.

"Of course, I know." I said. "Was also a woman with them?"

"It was not a woman, but a young GPU woman," he corrected.

"Then I know who she is. I trusted her, because she used to be my best friend," I replied feeling guilty. "Forgive me—I didn't intend to bring you such trouble."

"You'd better hurry—they will come again," he suggested.

"When they come, tell them that I left Taganrog for good, and that you don't know where I am going. Well, I'd better leave. Goodbye!" And I left my cousin's home in a hurry.

I understood that I had to leave town immediately. I also knew that I would be watched. I was walking and thinking about how to escape from being caught. I knew that it was very unlikely that they would grab me on the street with people around me. I knew that now, if it was possible, most arrests were done at night. But I was sure that they would definitely begin to follow me as soon as I left my cousin's home. I still had many friends and acquaintances in this town. But how could I dare to go and visit someone now? Of course, I wouldn't.

When I came to Petrovsky Street, I suddenly saw Varya on the corner of the city gardens. This was not a surprise for me, because I was sure that the night visit by the GPU agents to my cousin was her doing. For this reason, this encounter with her was both unpleasant and dangerous.

But I had to hide my apprehension, and with the air of a carefree man exclaimed, "Varya, how nice to see you again!"

"Where did you sleep last night?" she asked me without paying attention to my greetings.

In her question I had the confirmation to my suspicions, and the answer came to my mind, "Varya was at my cousin's home last night, otherwise, how could she know that I stayed overnight at some other place?"

"I was at my friend's place. Why?" I answered with complete unconcern.

She probably believed that I had not yet been to my cousin's home and didn't know that she had been there last night with the other GPU agents, because she changed her way of talking to me. "You see, I came by last evening... I wanted to stay with you for a couple of hours. But I was told that you were not home," she lied

to me, confirming again my suspicions.

"Oh," I said almost casually, "I have not been at my cousin's yet. I am sure that he will not forget to tell me about you."

We stopped at the entrance to the city gardens. She asked me, "And now where are you going?"

I didn't answer her question, and instead I casually pointed to the building of the former Men's Gymnasium and said to her, "You see, over there I left all that was dear to my heart!"

She obviously was not interested and repeated her question, "Where are you headed now?"

I hesitated to answer her. At that moment a car rolled up, probably the only taxi that was in town, and it stopped very close to us. The taxi driver jumped out, and opening the door of his old car, politely said to me, "I am very sorry to be late. You asked me to bring you to the rail station?"

"Yes, yes!" I replied hastily and instinctively rushed into the car.

I heard Varya's voice asking me again, "Where are you going?!"

"Home! Farewell!" these words I pronounced when the taxi was already rolling on the road.

The taxi driver was driving fast. He told me, "Your cousin Bonifaty asked me to find you and to help you to get out of town."

After he turned toward the Railway Square, the driver continued to speed up without ever slowing down, and soon he turned to Gymnasium's Street and then to Chekhovsky's Street. With the same speed, he rushed forward in the direction of the harbor, leaving behind waggoners, houses, trees, and pedestrians.

When we reached the Krepost suburb, my savior taxi driver turned into a dead-end lane and stopped. "Do you remember me?" he asked, removing his sunglasses.

I answered with surprise, "Sergey, my dear friend! How can I forget you?"

"Do you know who that young woman is?" He pronounced the words "young woman" with sarcasm.

"Yes, she used to be my best friend during my childhood and youth," I said, putting an emphasis on the words "used to be."

"Before she was a *Chekistka*," he called her by a coined name for a female agent of CheKa, "and now she is a GPU agent with a

terrible reputation. You have to escape from here as soon as possible. You cannot travel on the train now, because she heard me mentioning it. I will bring you to the port. The steamboat will leave in about a half-hour to Rostov-on-Don. From there you should find your way out by yourself. But be careful, GPU has their agents everywhere." He started the car, and in about ten minutes, we were in the port.

"This might be of use to you," he said, giving me a small package. "Remember, you can take only four shots." I didn't want to take it, but my former school friend insisted, "You don't know what will be waiting for you in Rostov. Take it. It's true that it is an old Buldozhka," he called it by a nickname for a popular old handgun, "but it can still provide help when needed. Have no doubts, it was tested more than once! And now, hurry! Buy the ticket and hide right away in the ship's hold below the lower deck!"

We said "farewell," and in a few minutes, I was sitting deep in the ship's hold among muzhiks and peasant women, speculators, and petty thieves, listening to the low hum of human voices. The years of NEP had opened the doors into a new way of life, and everyone who had some initiative was using it to catch up with what they had lost before. That's what my friend the taxi driver told me, too, that he had the only taxi in town and that business was good.

The package was hampering me and made me uncomfortable. I got up and went to the men's room, opened the package, and placed the gun in my pocket. The steamboat lazily moved out of the port. Shortly thereafter we reached the wide Don. Something happened with the engines, and we traveled slowly the rest of the trip, as if we were on a pleasure cruise. It took a long time to reach the wide mouth of the River Don.

We arrived in the late afternoon at Rostov-on-Don. I cautiously kept myself behind the other passengers who were rushing to disembark. As I was approaching the ship's ladder, I instinctively looked around to inspect the pier to see if there were any suspicious figures that could be waiting for me. Most of the pier was packed with passengers waiting to embark. Only a narrow passage enclosed with heavy nautical cord was left for the disembarking passengers. On that side of the pier, at the end of the passage, I saw Varya. She was standing there with one robust

young man dressed in the GPU uniform. I understood everything and thought, "My good friend was right. The Buldozhka gun might come in handy after all."

I began to slowly come down the ladder and, as soon as my feet were on the ground, instead of following the disembarking passengers, I sneaked under the nautical cord on the side leading into town and quickly inserted myself in the crowd of passengers waiting to embark. With difficulty, making my way against the pressure of the human bodies, stumbling against the bags, baskets, and other luggage, I reached the opposite side of the pier. Only then I looked back to the other side, where I had seen Varya with her companion. They were not there anymore, and I assumed that they saw me disappear in the crowd and would try to follow me.

I began to run from the pier and turned into the first side street, then turned right into another, and left into the next one, hoping that this unpredictable changing of direction would help me to lose my pursuers. The last turn I made was into a narrow, completely deserted dead-end alley with the back walls of the buildings connected to each other. On both sides there were no windows on the walls, and the back doors were locked. By this time, I was completely out of breath and was ready to give up running.

As I passed by one of the houses, I saw the back door open, and a man dressed in white and wearing a white hat was standing inside the door looking at me with the scared eyes. When I reached him, he called me in Russian with a heavy Armenian accent, "Come here, please. Come quickly, please." I jumped in the open door, and the Armenian quickly closed and locked it with the heavy bolt.

I found myself in the back room of an Armenian bakery full of empty flour bags. "Wait here, please," said the Armenian. And in a few seconds, he brought for me a white shirt, pants, and a baker's hat. "Please, put the baker's clothes on quickly," he said. In a few minutes I was in the bakery near the large container and was helping him to mix the dough. He didn't ask me from whom I was running, because in those days anyone knew that a decent-looking man could only be running from GPU agents.

I stayed in the bakery for the rest of the day, and no one came to look for me. I decided that I would leave the town the next

morning. Before going home, the baker gave me a freshly baked loaf of bread and a cup of tea and left me to sleep on the empty flour bags in the back room. Before locking the bakery's door, he said to me, "Wait here until tomorrow morning."

During the night I had a terrible nightmare. My dream began from the moment I put my feet on the pier. I was not able to escape into the crowd; instead I saw Varya and the big man dressed in the GPU uniform come close to me. She warned me, "You are under arrest." And both of them showed me their new handguns. They didn't search me. Varya was giving me commands, "Go ahead! Don't try to run away! Now turn right and walk forward!"

In my dream I was walking and weighing the situation. I knew Varya from her early childhood. She had always been a dexterous and fast-acting girl, and she probably still was. Her companion looked like a bear to me; he appeared to be clumsy, but unusually strong. They had two brand-new handguns. And I had only one, a very old Buldozhka.

I heard Varya's voice, "Go straight!" Then she commanded again, "Turn left!" I turned into a narrow, completely deserted dead-end alley; for some reason it looked very familiar to me, as if I had been there before. The buildings in the alley had the connected back walls, and the back doors were locked and there were no windows. I had a terrible premonition: "This is the end. It must be the dead-end alley where they shoot the enemies of the Bolsheviks."

I continued to walk at a normal pace—I didn't have any place to hurry anyway. And my guards did not press me to go faster. At some point, when we were walking on a familiar to me dead-end alley, I estimated, from the sound of their steps on the stones of the pavement, that they were not too close to me. I made a few long steps and then, pulling the Buldozhka from my pocket, suddenly turned toward my guards and fired the first bullet at Varya and the second at the awkward young man in the GPU uniform. I did it so unexpectedly that they had no time to react. I saw them both fall to the pavement, and they didn't move when I rushed to run back.

As I was passing one of the houses, I saw a back door open, and a man dressed in white, who looked also very familiar to me, was standing inside the door and calling me with a heavy

Armenian accent, “Come here, please. Come quickly, please.” I jumped in the open door, and the Armenian quickly closed and locked it with the heavy bolt. He gave me the white work clothes and put me to work in the bakery.

He confirmed my premonition that the dead-end alley was used to execute the “enemies of the Bolsheviks.” He said that at night the gravediggers come there and collect the bodies and take them somewhere to bury.

I was wondering what had happened to Varya and her companion. Were they only wounded and survived? Or were they dead? If they were dead, at night would the gravediggers take them and bury them with the “enemies of the Bolsheviks?” I wished that the latter were true.

At that moment I woke up from the sound of the locks on the heavy bakery door. It was very early in the morning. The Armenian baker came in and saluted me. Then he told me, “I will bring you out of town. Help me load the empty flour bags on the cart.” When we finished loading, he said, “Climb on the cart, and cover yourself with the flour bags. Don’t get out until I tell you it is safe.”

Very slowly, he drove out of town. The cart pulled by the horse did not attract any attention as we traveled on back roads, and nobody stopped us all the way to Bataysk. There the Armenian baker stopped the cart and told me to get out and said that from here it should be safe for me to travel on my own.

I said, “I don’t know how to thank you for saving my life.”

He said wisely, “God rewards good deeds.” And, giving me a strong handshake, he said, “God be with you!”

From there I traveled by train to Caucasus to cover my tracks and then returned to Ukraine.

In the years that followed, I often thought that my dream of killing Varya and the other GPU agent was a symbolic wish of killing all zealous Bolsheviks, all CheKa and GPU and NKVD agents, and putting an end to my running away from them.

1. See the chapter “Uncle Pavel.”

2. Former member of the White Guard. Name coined by the Bolsheviks for any person who fought in the White Army during the revolution

and civil war in Russia.



Vadim Kuzenko and His Parents

By Orest M. Gladky

Vadim and I were friends from childhood¹ through the time we both went as volunteers into the White Army² and served in the same Fifth Artillery Battery of the Drozdovsky Division. We lost contact when I had a contusion in my leg and was transferred to the artillery transport. While the Budyenny Cavalry encircled the transport, I escaped and on my own crossed the Chongarsky Bridge to Crimea.³ After recovery in Dzhankoy hospital I walked slowly south. Vadim, who remained with the artillery column, was lucky to catch a train, to reach the south shore on time, and to embark in Sevastopol on one of the last ships evacuating the escaping Whites abroad. I found out about what happened to Vadim much later.

Vadim's mother, Mar'ya Nykolayevna Kuzenko, for a long time was a good friend of my mother and she had visited her very often. Mar'ya Nikolayevna used to be a plump woman with a very dignified appearance. She had a large face with rather rough features, but she had a charming, deep-chested voice. And she impressed everybody mostly with a gentleness and sincerity of character. She was always favored by men who, without hiding their delight, liked to put their lips to her white plump hand in saluting her.

As a young woman she used to sing. Her contralto voice was very suitable for singing Gypsy romances, and she received well-deserved applause from the public during concerts.

After her marriage, which was not very successful, she remained socially as she was before, a very pleasant lady, but she abandoned her singing and dedicated her life to the upbringing of her only son, Vadim, whom she called Vadyk.⁴

Vadim's father, Yelisyey Ivanovich Kuzenko, was a railway official who occasionally substituted for the assistant station-

master and had a small business as an auctioneer of coal mines. He liked to play cards and indulged in womanizing and drinking good wine. It was hard to pinpoint which one of these three vices had priority in his life, but he was rarely home. If he was not busy with his duties on the railroad, he was either driving in his automobile—usually with his female companions—to the mines to take care of his business matters, or taking part in some kind of meeting or conference, or indulging in drinking bouts surrounded by the fancy women.

When after two years of absence I finally returned home to Nikitovka, I found many changes there. Those changes also happened to Vadim's parents. Mar'ya Nikolayevna, though trying to maintain her previous dignity, had a face considerably pinched with a shadow of sadness and concern about her only son, from whom she had only a few lines now and then from Paris, France.

She often invited me to visit her and was able to listen for hours as I recounted about my and Vadim's life at the front. Surprisingly for me, I never found Yelisyey Ivanovich home, though his business matters should have been completely stopped, since the coal mines were taken by the Bolsheviks, and his drinking bouts ended, because it was hard to find even bread on the market! And most of the members of the business society he dealt with had evacuated with the White Army and probably were already somewhere abroad.

For a while Yelisyey Ivanovich had kept his railroad employment because he had expertise in his field and was a valuable asset to the new railway administration. But he knew very well that as soon as possible he should move far from here, where everybody knew him. He knew that his membership in a society of auctioneers and his son's record as a volunteer in the White Army didn't give him a very good reputation in the eyes of the new Soviet workers-and-peasants authorities, and that one day he might disappear in the GPU cellars.

For this reason, he secretly petitioned for a transfer to another railroad station. Finally, his efforts paid off, and he and his wife moved to Taganrog.

The whereabouts of the Kuzenko family was not known to me for some time. In 1929, when I was taking care of my dying father, we suddenly had a visit from Yelisyey Ivanovich, who recounted what had happened to himself, his wife, and his son Vadim.

At the time of his visit, he was returning home after being summoned to appear immediately before the GPU of Odessa⁵ to testify during the investigation of his son. It turned out that Vadim, with a small group of foolhardy fellows, all former White Army volunteers, bought a motorboat in Bulgaria and set off in the Black Sea for the homeland. The border guard of the GPU caught them before they reached land, brought them to Odessa, and put them in the cellars of the city's GPU. The relatives of the *vosvrashchentsy*⁶ were summoned and interrogated, but they were not allowed to see the prisoners.

Yelisyy Ivanovich was very upset and told us, "This incident in the life of the Kuzenko family could not pass by without tragic consequences. I am not stupid. I understand that my career on the railway is over and that my days of freedom are running out. When I return home, I will buy a small *dacha*⁷ in the country and move there with Mar'ya Nikolayevna. This will be my last deed of taking care of my wife's welfare." And Yelisyy Ivanovich concluded, "Because now I can expect any day that the GPU agents will be knocking at my door..." That was the last time I saw him.

Several years later I encountered one of my and Vadim's friends from Nikitovka, who updated me on what had happened to the Kuzenko family. He told me that he'd encountered Mar'ya Nikolayevna several times at a *tolkuchka*⁸ where she was selling her last possessions. In the beginning she was glad to see him and talk about Vadim and Yelisyy Ivanovich and about the hard times she had living alone.

She told him that shortly after Yelisyy Ivanovich returned from Odessa, he was arrested and deported somewhere near the town of Tomsk⁹ for three years of hard labor. However, Yelisyy Ivanovich had not survived the rigors of life in the concentration camp and, in the second year, he died.

Vadim and his audacious friends were held for several months in the GPU cellars. Then suddenly there was an order—that was even publicized in the newspapers for some kind of propaganda purposes—to send the *vosvrashchentsy* back abroad the same way they came, in their own motorboat. But what was not stated in the newspapers was that before their departure, the GPU agents damaged the motor on their boat. Then they brought the prisoners to the open sea and left them during the night to their destiny, probably hoping that they would not survive. But the

"humanitarian" deed of the Bolsheviks worked in favor of the young *vosvrashchentsy*; their destiny brought them back to the Bulgarian shores. Vadim had returned to Paris and was able through the underground mail to communicate this to his mother.

After the arrest of her husband, Mar'ya Nikolayevna remained not only in complete solitude but also without means of subsistence because Yelisey Ivanovich, notwithstanding his shrewdness, did not consider that her being a wife of a political convict would prevent her from finding work.

At first, she was selling her jewelry preserved almost by a miracle, and she lived off it for some time. Then she started to sell her old furniture, which was of good quality, but it was not easy to sell in those days unless she sold it so cheap that it was almost giving it away. Then she took her husband's suits and her dresses to the market. And finally came a moment that there was nothing more she could sell except the country cottage—and that's what she did and moved to a town where she hoped to find some kind of work.

In town, she had no luck; everywhere they were asking, "Where is your husband?" and "Who was your husband before the revolution?" And after finding out that he was in Siberia, or that he was an official of the railways, they would answer her, "We don't hire 'enemies of the people' or their wives!"

She found a small room to rent and was living on the money left from selling the cottage. When that money started to run out and she became scared to remain on the street, a hard time came for Mar'ya Nikolayevna to look for a way out of her hopeless situation. For her there remained three solutions: end her life by suicide, start begging, or survive by stealing. A tiny hope to see her son one day kept her from the idea of suicide. Then there were the other two solutions...

My friend told me, "As the time went by, Mar'ya Nikolayevna steered clear of me and seemed really to avoid meeting me."

I suggested to my friend, "Maybe she did not want to put you in danger by having contact with the wife of the 'enemy of the people.'"

"That's possible, very possible," he answered. "Anyway, let me finish her story," he said.

"One day early in the morning, my brother and I were hurrying to the store where, as we heard the day before, they

would be having whatever they *dayut*,¹⁰ and where we might stand in line and hope that our turn came before they closed the store or ran out of merchandise.”

“I know what you mean—standing in line all day long and returning home empty-handed,” I commented.

And my friend described to me the following horrible scene that he witnessed.

“One morning, as my friend Nikolay and I walked on one of the side streets while taking a shortcut to the center of town, we were surprised to hear so early in the morning the loud and exciting screams of a crowd walking toward us in the middle of a dusty street. As they came closer to us, we could see better what was going on and hear the sharp and gross expressions coming from the procession. Several men and women walked up front and were holding firmly the naked arms of an elderly looking woman who already had signs of being tattered by the crowd. Her long hair was disheveled, clothes were torn, and her bosom was naked. Her wide-open eyes were looking with terror somewhere ahead, and her face was wet with tears. Both face and breasts were blue from the received blows, and in some places blood was dripping from the wounds.

“The people who were holding her were pulling with such a force that it seemed they wanted to tear her body into pieces. Those who were behind pulled her hair and banged on her back and head with sticks. The unfortunate woman looked as if she was losing consciousness, and she dropped her head on her chest. Her legs were giving way under her, but she couldn’t fall because those who were holding her were pulling her by the arms even harder.

“Occasionally, some men and women would jump out of the crowd in front of the woman, make faces and spit at her, or strike her in the face, pinch her breasts. Some women dared to pull their skirts up and show her their naked behinds. From the crowd came infuriated screams, ‘Thief! ...Thief!’ Vile abuse and bad language from the men and women accompanied their wild jumping up and down.

“The horror-stricken woman’s eyes filled with tears; she could not even see the road beneath her and she was groaning, ‘O-o-kh! ...O-o-kh! ...Forgive me ...forgive me, good people! ...O-o-kh!’

“Suddenly one man jumped out from the crowd, grabbed a

broken large metal pot lying on one side of the street, and pushed it on the head of the unfortunate woman. The crowd went into a rage; it hooted and whistled and roared with laughter. Somebody, from behind, hit the pot with a heavy stick. The victim vacillated and started slowly to descend to the ground. Those who were holding her let her go, and her body fell heavily on the dusty road. The metal pot hit the ground with a hollow rumble and rolled away. The crowd stopped and stood still and silent for a while and, after realizing what happened, quickly melted away in the narrow side streets.

“When we came closer to the victim and saw the disfigured woman’s face covered with dust and those immobile big eyes staring like asking forgiveness, I suddenly recognized that the woman was Mar’ya Nikolayevna Kuzenko! ‘Poor woman!’ I exclaimed. ‘She made an easy choice to survive... and a tragic way to die...’”

After a long, silence my friend added, “We stood there for a while stunned from the surprise. Then it dawned on us that she was dead and we couldn’t help her anymore. It is better for us not to get involved in this tragic story of the mob’s triumph when the GPU arrives! And we hurriedly walked away.”

After listening to this heartbreaking story about the death of my dear friend Vadim’s mother, I repeated with sorrow, “Poor Mar’ya Nikolayevna... what a tragic way to die...”

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1. See the chapter “Childhood and Youth in Nikitovka.”
 2. See the chapter “White Army Volunteers.”
 3. See the chapter “Nata.”
 4. Nickname for the name Vadim.
 5. Large city and port on the shore of the Black Sea in southern Ukraine.
 6. Name given by the soviets to persons returning from abroad after having escaped from the Reds during the revolution and the civil war.
 7. Cottage.
 8. Flea market.
 9. Old town in Siberia, northeast of Novosibirsk.
 10. “Give out,” a common expression meaning that the state store is

selling something that is usually not available on their shelves.



In the Hamlet of Snyezhnoye

*As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky and Olga Gladky
Verro*

During the race for the industrialization of the country, the industry required higher production of coal. Large numbers of coal miners were recruited from other regions of the Soviet Union. Some of these migrant workers came alone, leaving their families wherever their home was, but many others brought their families with them. New additions to the hamlet were built at an accelerated speed to provide housing for this large number of urgently recruited coal miners and employees.

The hamlet of Snyezhnoye was located in the Donbas region of the Ukraine. It was built to house miners and employees of the Coal Mine Number Ten. It was unofficially called at that time the Mine Amerikanka because it had been built by American engineers. It was located up the hill from the big old village, also called Snyezhnoye.

The coal miners and other laborers were housed not too far from the mine in the quickly built barracks—low and long simple wooden structures with very small windows. In the middle of each barrack was a row of long tables and benches for all residents to use. Between the tables several cast-iron stoves were installed with the pipes going out the roof. These provided heat during the cold weather, a place for boiling water for tea, and for keeping food warm at mealtime. On both sides of the tables along the outer walls, the space was divided with thin wooden boards into small cubicles with just enough space for bunk beds to sleep either one family or several men or women, and shelves to keep their belongings.

There was one communal kitchen with several coal-burning stoves, tables, and a big wooden barrel for drinking water. Several smaller pails for collecting dirty water and garbage stood on the floor and were emptied outside in the garbage pit that was dug near a big communal wooden outhouse. The outhouse was

divided in half—one side for men and the other for women. The lavatory located next to the kitchen was also divided in half, and a cast-iron stove provided heat and a place to warm the water that was stored in the big wooden barrel. There, the tired miners would wash themselves in the metal washbasins and pour the dirty water in the pails to discard outside. The women's lavatory was also used for bathing children and for washing clothes. The water-carrier delivered water daily in the big wooden barrel pulled by a horse.

Farther from the mine—near the wheat fields of the neighboring village of Snyezhnoye—another part of the hamlet was built for the selected class of people—communist party bosses, supervisors, engineers, technicians, doctors, nurses, bookkeepers, and white-collar and miners' cooperative employees.

This part of the hamlet had several rows of one-story brick duplexes, with others in the various phases of construction. To speed up the availability of the living quarters for the rapidly growing population of this part of the hamlet, plumbing was left to be done at a later, indefinite date. And, although each apartment had a small room intended at some time to become a lavatory, wooden outhouses were built outside next to the sheds for storage of wood and coal. Behind the outhouses were open shallow pits for discarding garbage.

The water for this part of the hamlet was also delivered several times a week in a big wooden water-carrier's barrel pulled by a horse, and each family filled as many buckets as they needed for drinking, cooking, bathing, and washing clothes. All these tasks were done in the kitchen, where the water could be warmed on the brick kitchen stove; the warm air from the oven provided a comfortable temperature for bathing in the winter. The same oblong, zinc-coated iron washbasin was used for bathing and washing clothes.

My sister, Nyusya, got her first employment and moved to the hamlet of Snyezhnoye with her baby son, whom she nicknamed Talik. As a doctor, she received from the mine administration an apartment in a duplex house with two bedrooms, a kitchen, a hall, and a covered porch. She shipped by rail from Kharkov all furniture from her apartment furnished by Yan Ryapo. By the standards of those days, she had a beautifully made, high quality

wood bedroom set, which included an armoire with mirrored door, a chest of drawers, and a large bed made of enameled metal tubing decorated with shiny brass balls. It was covered with a new white brocade bedspread, and on top of it towered large down pillows with pillowcases finely embroidered by her sister Tanya. Talik had a nice child's bed with sliding sides. On a wall over Talik's bed there was a multicolored appliquéd wall hanging with a winged gnome, butterflies, red mushrooms, flowers, and grass. The airy lace curtains on the windows added to the elegance of this large bedroom and revealed Nyusya's refined taste.

To help her with the baby during the day, she found a woman who worked on the second shift in the hospital. In exchange for her services, Nyusya gave her a free place to live and two meals a day, which the woman cooked for all three of them. It was a convenient arrangement for both; Nyusya didn't have to worry about Talik, and the woman got out of the barracks, where she'd shared a cubicle with other women who worked at the mine. However, this arrangement was not always perfect.

With the help of Commissar Yan Ryapo, Nyusya was able to get into Kharkovsky Medical Institute's program for *aspirantura*.¹ It was a graduate program mainly preparing students for teaching positions in the Institute. Several times during the year, the aspirants were required to attend lectures, pass the exams, and attend other parts of the program at the institute in the city of Kharkov. When she needed to travel and to be absent for several days or weeks, she was always afraid to leave Talik for such long periods with the simple woman, without anybody to supervise both of them.

It was as if her prayers were answered when Nyusya received my letter from Nikitovka,² in which I asked her to find out if there were any openings for teaching positions at the local schools in the hamlet where she lived. Indeed, there was one specific position that she believed was perfect for me, and she notified me promptly that I should come right away to apply for the new school year.

I went to Snyezhnoye immediately and found that the administration of *Gorpromuch*³ that was opening the doors in the fall of the school year 1928–1929 was looking for qualified teachers who had experience in teaching adults. My previous

employment at the Rabfak in Yuzovka turned out to be an invaluable reference at the time, when many new schools for adults were opening in all industrial areas of the Soviet Union and experienced teachers were hard to find. I was hired on the spot as a teacher of Russian language and literature.

Nyusya offered me to share her apartment and living expenses. The young woman who was watching Talik had moved her bed to the kitchen, and I had the smaller room for my family. It was an ideal arrangement, and I moved with my daughter Lyalya to the hamlet of Snezhnoye right away. My husband, Orest, remained in Nikitovka to help his sister Vera take care of their dying father.⁴

My husband shipped by rail our few belongings, which after six years of marriage we kept to a minimum necessary in case we needed to move quickly from one place to another because of my husband's political past. All the possessions we had could be counted on the fingers of two hands: two metal frame beds, one for us and another smaller one for our daughter, a table and four chairs, two book shelves, a medium-size trunk for storing clothes and linen, a cardboard box for pots and pans, and a primitive washstand my husband made from a metal can attached to a board fastened to the stool on which was placed a bowl to collect the wash water, and it had a hook for the small mirror that he used for shaving. Orest came for a short visit to help me to settle down. We made a family photo at the photographer studio at the village of Snyezhnoye, and he promptly returned to Nikitovka to be with his dying father.



Orest Mikhailovich Gladky and Antonina (Tonya) Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladky with their six-and-a-half-year-old daughter Olga (Lyalya). Photo taken in Snyezhnoye before Orest went into a long period of hiding from the secret police. Snyezhnoye, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, October 3, 1929.

During the first year that my daughter and I lived with my sister, Nyusya was able to make all the necessary trips to Kharkov to fulfill years' requirements for *aspirantura*. She didn't have to worry because I supervised the woman who watched her little

son Talik. And I felt more secure having a woman during the day to keep an eye on my daughter when I was teaching in *Gorpromuch*. It seemed a perfect accommodation for all of us, including the young woman who in exchange for her services had free meals, a place to live, and some extra money to spend. During the day she cooked for us, watched our children, cleaned the apartment, and washed our clothes.

During that year I had a chance to meet Nyusya's lover, Yan Ryapo, who under an excuse of being on *komandirovka*⁵ came to visit his son and Nyusya several times. He usually stayed only one day, and during his visit he dedicated all his time to enjoying his son Talik. He used to bring lots of toys for Talik and many other gifts for him and Nyusya. He was also helping Nyusya financially with his son and her *aspirantura* pursuit.

During that first year Nyusya found temporary work in Snyezhnoye for our youngest brother, Petya,⁶ and our stepbrother, Zhorzh.⁷ The administration of the coal mine was preparing to celebrate a very important special event—the mine had surpassed the output of coal above and beyond the norm established by the central government in Moscow. Lots of posters had to be designed with visual documentation on colored charts and designs showing the achievements of the miners. Petya was an expert in geometrical drafting, and Zhorzh was quite good in artistic illustrations; between the two of them, they made spectacular posters and long placards with all kinds of communist slogans printed in huge letters.

It was a happy time, with lots of activity in our apartment while the two young uncles, Petya and Zhorzh, were working on this project. Both Lyalya and Talik had so much fun sitting or lying on the floor and painting on pieces of leftover paper with colored pencils and paint they had not seen in such abundance before. Lyalya was very impressed with their work and asked her Uncle Petya how he had learned to do all this so well. She told him in a very determined way that she wanted to learn it, too, and one day to become a designer like he was. She also followed her uncles into the Miners' Club, a big wooden structure that they decorated with their artwork. She helped by passing them hammers and nails to secure the posters to the wooden walls.

The young uncles also had fun playing with the children, especially with Talik, who had just learned to walk and talk.

One day they surprised Nyusya by teaching Talik to call her *hadyuka*,⁸ which he learned very well by being reinforced by their laughing each time he pronounced this word. For a long time after the young men had finished their work and left for home, Lyalya used the remaining paper, pencils, and paints to “teach” classes to the neighborhood children.

My work at the *Gorpromuch* was interesting, and I enjoyed working with adult students. At home, life was going smoothly, with all three of us women helping each other take care of children and the apartment. It would have been a perfect arrangement if my husband had been living with us, too. I missed him very much and hoped he would join us soon.

I had received two telegrams from him from Nikitovka—one notifying me about the death of his father, and another saying, “It’s time to go.” This message was our secret way of saying that he had to leave in a hurry because of the problems related to his political White past. After that I didn’t receive any news from him for a long time and feared the worst—that he had finally been arrested by the GPU.

Then I began to receive some postcards once in a while with short messages saying that he was well and that he missed me and our daughter, but they were always without a return address and were mailed from various parts of the country. This indicated that he was trying to cover up the tracks of his whereabouts to lose the GPU investigators on his trail. Several postcards were mailed from as far as the town of Novosibirsk⁹; then suddenly they were mailed from Caucasus.¹⁰ The last one was mailed from as close as the small station in the Donetsk region. The last message was that he would be teaching in a small village school,¹¹ and that as soon as he had settled down, he would send me his address. It was very good news, and I waited with great anticipation for his next letter.

1. Graduate studies.

2. See the chapter “Nikitovka’s Last Gentleman.”

3. *Gorpromuch*—acronym for *Gorno-Promyshlennoye Uchylishche*—Industrial-Mining School.

4. See the chapter “Nikitovka’s Last Gentleman.”

5. Business trip.
6. Pyetr Gavriylovich Berezhnoy.
7. Zhorzh Ploskogolovy, a son of the second wife of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy.
8. "Viper" (in Ukrainian).
9. See the chapter "Uncle Pavel."
10. See the chapter "The Last Encounter."
11. See the chapters "The Dispossessed" and "Meeting on the Farmstead."



My Childhood in the Hamlet of Snyezhnoye

By Olga Gladky Verro

I was not six years old yet when my mother and I went to live with my Aunt Nyusya in the hamlet of Snyezhnoye. In a very short time I met most of the children of preschool and elementary school age living in the employee section of the hamlet. During the day most of our parents were at work, and we were left free to play anywhere in the hamlet—in the wheat fields bordering it, in the forest nearby, or in the miners' part of the hamlet that was closer to the mine. We always played in small groups, and our activities changed depending on the seasons, the weather, and the time of the day.



Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky). Hamlet of Snyezhnoye, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, Summer 1928.

There was no real danger for us to play at any place in the hamlet or its vicinities, where rarely an occasional horse could be seen slowly pulling some wagon on the unpaved roads. The only person who came two or three times a week was the water-carrier with the big wooden water-barrel, and he stopped near every house to let the people fill their buckets and other containers with the water.

One of those places that we used to play was the unpaved road that passed right outside the house in which we lived. There,

nobody disturbed us. During the dry summer season, when the road was covered with a deep layer of hot, soft, powdered earth, we liked to walk back and forth barefoot, raising puffs of dust with each step. During the rains, when the earth had absorbed enough water, it was transformed into a rich, black, smooth river of mud. Like the ducklings on the pond, we splashed and blended the slippery mixture with our bare feet. When we played long enough, we would wash ourselves with soap under the rain and, before entering the house, would shake off the drops of water like the little birds from their feathers.

And what fun we had when the mud had drained a little to the right density of dough from which we would build marvelous mud castles and even entire hamlets alongside the road. We would leave them there to dry in the sun and return every day to play there, with each of us having our "own house" until some clumsy muzhik would destroy our constructions with the wheels of his cart.

When the wheat fields bordering our part of the hamlet were in full growth, we liked to penetrate the thick green sea that would cover the older children up to their shoulders, and the younger ones up to the top of their heads. In the fields we used to collect bright-red poppies with delicate petals, brilliant-blue long-lasting cornflowers, and white daisies that were hiding between the spikes of wheat just beginning to fill in the seeds.

After the rains we used to walk in the forest collecting all kinds of mushrooms in our baskets. Usually we went into the forest in a large group that included school-age children who could distinguish the edible from the poisonous mushrooms; we, the younger ones, collected only those that the older ones told us to pick. Sometimes we collected full baskets of all sorts of mushrooms, enough to fry in butter for the whole family. At the right seasons we also collected small and sweet wild strawberries, wild raspberries, gooseberries, and other types of berries.

In the early spring, when the snow was not melted yet under the trees, we collected handfuls of delightful-smelling Lily-of-the-Valley flowers and, of course, snowdrop flowers that we used to pull out with their small round bulbs. We peeled them right there and ate the delightful sweet bulb. Later in the spring, we used to collect the bitter-smelling purple violets that my mother liked so much.

Besides the snowdrop bulbs, our group of children knew many other plants with edible parts. We found them at different seasons in various parts of our neighborhood. In the spring we collected the sour-tasting fleshy leaves of sorrel that we would bring home, and our families would use it to prepare a delicious soup. In the summer we used to walk along the railroad tracks leading to the coal mine. There on the high banks we found many edible grasses and a variety of robust and taller plants. One of them we called “Rabbit Ears” because of the shape of the leaves and the soft whitish downy nap on the surface. These plants had tall and thick stems and hard skin that we peeled, revealing a juicy sweet and crunchy inside that we ate on the spot. Then there were other plants with bunches of small yellow flowers, probably of the wild turnip family. Their stems were thinner and the skin not as thick, and we just chewed them and sucked the sweet juice, spitting out the rough part.

In the evening, usually after supper when it was not quite dark, we congregated closer to home and played hide-and-seek in the ditches prepared for the foundations of the new homes that were constantly being built in the hamlet. The ditches were deep enough to hide most of the younger children, and we could run inside without being detected from outside.

Once in a while we would go to the swamp and sit leisurely on the trunk of a fallen tree, and we would observe the frogs and various insects. I remember one time when we went to a swamp and all of us collected tadpoles in bottles filled with water. I don’t remember what we intended to do with them the next day, but being afraid that they would escape during the night, I sealed the bottle with a cork and left it on the porch. In the morning I had a lesson in biology by finding out that tadpoles cannot survive without air because all of them were dead.

After the departure of my Uncle Petya,¹ who decorated posters and hung them in the Miners’ Club, I used the leftover paper, colored pencils, and paints to play “school” in the entrance hall of our apartment. For a long time the children from our neighborhood were students, and I, of course, was the teacher. I remembered “how to teach” from the days when we lived in the village of Nyzhnyaya Krynka, when I used to go to school with my mother and father and sit in their classes.²

On those days when the woman who watched my cousin Talik

was not in the kitchen cooking and her bed was free, we played the "hospital" game. There were several children whose mothers or fathers were doctors and worked in the hospital with my Aunt Nyusya. They knew the routine of doctors and would take a lead in the game. One of the older children would impersonate a "doctor," assign a "nurse," and use our kitchen as a doctor's office or a hospital room while all the others stayed in line in the entrance hall to wait their turn for the doctor's examination. Some children who were found to be "sick" were ordered to stay in bed; for the others, the "doctor" prescribed some "medications," and water was given to them with a spoon.

There was one family in the hamlet with a deaf-mute boy who was slightly younger than I. His father was a mining engineer who came before the revolution from some European country. He married a local woman and remained to live and work in the mine. They did not allow their son to roam around the hamlet with other children. But his mother, who didn't work, would occasionally call one or two children at a time to play with the boy.

I remember that it was a real treat to be invited by his mother into their apartment. There were many beautiful foreign-made toys that most of the children in our hamlet had never seen anywhere else. The boy liked to set his small table with a miniature porcelain tea set and have a ceremony of a tea party. With a gesture of his hand, he would invite us to sit on the small chairs. Then he would carefully pour real tea from a small teapot, passing cups and saucers and small spoons to each of us, and then passing the sugar bowl and the real cookies on a small platter. He communicated with us only with hand gestures and facial expressions, like playing in pantomime, and his very gentle manners detracted from his handicap of not being able to hear and speak.

During that summer my mother bought me a small baby-doll, about ten inches tall, made of flesh-colored gutta-percha that was sold naked under the trade name Pupsyk. It had a movable head, arms, and legs and could be placed in a sitting position. Most important, it was washable. That doll opened for me a whole new activity that I continued for many years to come. The first thing that I did was to find a way to dress her up.

During vacation trips to Slavyansk, we also visited my

maternal grandfather, who was a tailor. I observed him at work drafting chalk patterns directly on the wool cloth, cutting the fabrics with big shears, sewing by hand and on the sewing machine. He used to let me play with pieces of cloth, small scissors, and a threaded needle. I liked to imitate him by sewing odd buttons to the fabric and sewing two pieces of cloth together.

Therefore, I started my first project of dressing my Pupsyk with a conviction that I knew how to sew. Neither my mother nor my Aunt Nyusya could be of much help to me because neither of them hadn't learned real sewing techniques, other than mending, from their father, and they had to use the services of a seamstress. Their coats and suits and my father's outfits were all made by my grandfather during our summer vacations when we visited him in Slavyansk.

To buy fabrics in the cooperative store was not always easy because of constant shortages, and one couldn't choose the quality, colors, or designs of fabrics that were occasionally available for sale. Therefore, my mother and I didn't have too many dresses or other items of clothing. But my Aunt Nyusya had a better variety of outfits for herself and for Talik because she was able to procure them during her visits to the large city of Kharkov and, of course, from the exquisite presents from her lover, Yan Ryapo.

However, we were fortunate to live in Donbas, a cradle of the high-quality coal anthracite, an essential source of energy for the growing Soviet industry. The government was trying to attract a labor force to that region and to keep the coal miners content by providing them with a reasonable supply of the essential foodstuff, clothing, and other consumer goods which were always in short supply in other regions of the country. But the availability of products in the coal miners' cooperative was sporadic as a result of poor planning, coordination, and distribution. Many times when the cooperative received one kind of a product in large quantities, people from the whole hamlet and vicinities would flock for a buying spree. They would buy as much as they could store, or afford, because one never knew when this product would arrive again, maybe not for another year.

I remember one time when the word reached us that the cooperative had received honey, barrels of honey. To buy it, we had to bring our own containers to be filled and weighed. The

four of us, my Aunt Nyusya, the woman who lived with us, my mother and I, went several times to fill the jars, bring them home, empty them in whatever container we could find and go back again and again. We ended up with honey everywhere, in all pots and pans, jars, and even the washbasin. The same would happen with all other products that could be preserved. But with fabrics this usually didn't happen—one could not buy or select much from the few bolts that were snatched away immediately upon arrival.

Well, as soon as I decided to dress up my Pupsyk, I requested that my mother and my aunt give me the remnants of fabrics returned to them by their seamstresses. They gave me only the smaller pieces from their collections, and I resented that. I thought that they were really stingy. I couldn't figure out what they were saving them for, until I became older and saw those larger pieces being used to enlarge and lengthen my dresses to make them useful for one more year.

I started my sewing craft by making my Pupsyk very simple, straight dresses by draping the fabric around her body and cutting shapes around her neck and armpits. With time I became more skillful and sophisticated in my sewing by observing our women neighbors, who sewed for themselves and with whom I shared the fashion pictures from a "Women's Journal" to which my mother subscribed. I loved to look at the fashion section of women's and children's clothing and to fantasize that I could sew all those dresses for me.

When we lived in the village of Nizhnyaya Krynka, I remember the only Christmas tree that I ever had before the Bolsheviks abolished this religious holiday. My father brought from his home in Nikitovka a box with beautiful Christmas decorations, figurines, and balls made of wax and glass. Then in the evenings my father made toys and other decorations for the Christmas tree from colored paper and cardboard, with me helping him. We kept these decorations as heirlooms for many years when Christmas couldn't be celebrated. I remember that sometimes I would secretly open the box, display the contents on the table, and just sit and admire them.

Those skills that I had learned helping my father in constructing those decorations came in handy now in making patterns for my Pupsyk as I looked at the children's fashions in

the “Women’s Journal” and tried to copy them.

One of our neighbors taught me some simple embroidery stitches, and my mother, as well as my neighbor, showed me how to do a simple crochet. I put these skills to use right away and adorned Pupsyk’s dresses, crocheted hats for her, bags, and shoes. But the fabric scraps given to me by my mother, aunt, and our neighbor soon were all used up, and I found new sources in the garbage piles of other neighbors who’d discarded them. I collected the precious finds, washed them well, ironed, and voilà, I was making many new outfits for my doll.

The first year we lived in Snyezhnoye without my father, who remained in Nikitovka with his father, who was very ill. After being used in Nyzhnyaya Krynka to have him all for myself in the evening—teaching me to read and write or making all kinds of toys from paper and cardboard, or just sitting next to me as I was drawing—I missed him very much. I did not understand the reason for us to be separated from him and was continuously asking my mother, “When will Papa come to live with us?”

In January 1929 my mother received a letter from my father in which he wrote that his father’s health was going down very fast and that they expected that the end would come soon. He wrote that he absolutely didn’t want us to come to the funeral.

I heard my mother share with my Aunt Nyusya that she was worrying about a short paragraph in the letter stating that he lost his teaching position before the elections for the Soviets, and that he was selecting his options where he should go to look for a new place of employment.

I promptly asked, “Couldn’t he find a place to teach here in Snyezhnoye?”

“Lyalya!” warned my mother. “I was talking to your aunt. This is a matter for adults to discuss! You should not meddle in our discussions.”

“But I want my father to come and live with us,” I replied.

“Well, it is not so easy,” explained my mother, “because your father makes very clear in his letter that he is not planning to join us in Snyezhnoye.” At that time she could not tell me that he needed time to cover up his tracks because his White Army past was haunting him again.

“Why?” I insisted.

“Well,” she tried again to give me an answer that would make

sense in my child's mind, "you see, now that I have a secure and good employment and you and I have good place to live, Papa can travel and look for really good employment for himself."

It the middle of February 1929, my grandfather Mikhail Makarovich Gladky died. After his funeral my father remained for a short time in Nikitovka. But soon after Easter we received a very short telegram from him stating only: "It's time to go. Wait for my address." I didn't know that it was a coined phrase that my father used when a danger of being arrested by the secret police seemed to be imminent. The telegram was not even signed, and my mother told my aunt, "He must have been either in a hurry, or he didn't want his name to appear on the telegram." I was puzzled again with her comment.

After that, during the summer we received an occasional postcard with pictures of some places with names unknown to me, but he wrote only a few phrases and didn't ever mention visiting us. I imagined all kinds of scenarios of what could have happened to him. My mother's explanations for his continuing absence were not making sense in my child's mind. After being used to being so close to him, I just felt that there was something wrong, and that I was being abandoned by my father.

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1. See the chapter "In the Hamlet of Snyezhnoye."
 2. See the chapter "The Village School."



Peasants' Plight

Historical Research by Olga Gladky Verro

Collectivization of agriculture, as planned by the Communist Party, was proceeding very slowly because the peasants were resisting organization of kolkhoz,¹ the infamous name coined by the Soviet authorities to the collective farm. The revolutionary slogan promised “All land to the peasants!” and the peasants expected to keep the land for private farming. But this long-awaited dream turned out to be short-lived.

Before the revolution, peasants were cultivating the land given to the village community during the emancipation from serfdom in 1861. This land was divided on patriarchal lines for each household in the village, and this allowed the sons to inherit it.

From 1905 to 1907, the Russian government allowed the peasants to buy and sell their lots of land. The peasants were encouraged to buy land from those who were selling their parcels and moving to the cities and towns to work in the emerging industry. The peasants who had a knack for business bought much of this land and became well-to-do peasants who provided a steady and reliable supply of grain for the country.

By 1916, during the war with Germany, the Russian government had started bread rationing in the cities, towns, and hamlets. And during the Revolution of 1917–1918, the government expropriated the land from the landowners and distributed it among all households in the villages. Also in 1917, the Provisional Government had introduced State monopoly on grain, ordering the peasants to deliver to the government all their surplus of grain at the established price. The farmers started to hide a portion of the grain from the authorities and barter it for consumer goods on the black market.

During the civil war that followed the revolution, the peasants were cultivating the land, which by then they considered their own by right—some they had inherited from their fathers, some other they had received from the distribution of the former

landowner's land, and some they bought from other peasants. However, during the Civil War they also endured grain requisition by the Reds, Whites, and Greens, who needed it to feed their armies and the population under their control.

As the Bolsheviks started to establish their authority in the country, they outlawed private grain trading and ordered the peasants to sell grain at the established price to the government. The peasants resisted giving their grain to the state at low prices and continued their practice of hiding portions of the grain and bartering it on the black market.

As the Soviet government began rapid national industrialization, it needed foreign machinery that was purchased with the money from the sale of grain abroad. But peasants resisted selling their grain to the government at the state-established extremely low price, so grain procurement was lower than expected by the State.

The Bolshevik Party directed government authorities to use various means to requisition grain from the peasants. The name *kulak* was coined to identify the prosperous farmers who were declared to be "the enemies of the people." Brigades of Bolshevik Party members composed of workers, soldiers, and sailors were dispatched to the villages and farmsteads to requisition by threats and by force the hoarded grain out of the *kulaks'* hiding places. They used cunning and deception by splitting the villagers into two opposing groups—the poor against the well-to-do peasants.

The confrontation of the Bolshevik regime with the peasantry escalated into a harsh and relentless campaign against the prosperous farmers. The Bolsheviks' doctrine of collectivization could not tolerate any more private farming. The Soviet government was eager to take full control over the production of grain.

Collectivization of agriculture on a voluntary basis proceeded too slowly. Now emphasis was on the enforcement of collectivization. Bolsheviks engaged in eliminating private farming by dispossessing successful farmers, the kulaks, of their land and other property, that was called *raskulachivaniye*. It sent the majority of kulaks into forced labor camps, called gulags, in Siberia and other faraway places of the Soviet Union.

Since the beginning of the campaign for collectivization, the farmers had resisted the idea of organizing collective farms. And

in the winter of 1930, Stalin issued an order that all agriculture had to become organized in the collective farms at any cost. All over the Soviet Union collectivization agents were dispatched from the Bolshevik Party district offices to hold public meetings in the villages and farmsteads. During those meetings the peasants were forced to pass sham resolutions of the so-labeled “unanimous” and “voluntary” organization of *kolkhoz*.²

Peasants considered collectivization to be worse than the serfdom that was abolished in 1861, they felt betrayed by the revolution, and were resentful of the Communist Party and Bolshevik government.

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1. Acronym of *Kollektivnoye khozyaystvo*—collective farm.
 2. See the chapters: “The Dispossessed,” “Meeting on the Farmstead” and “The Village School.”



Meeting on the Farmstead

By Orest M. Gladky

During the snowy winter of 1930, I was a teacher in a village school¹ on the farmstead Proletarskaya Volya.² One morning when I was in the classroom teaching, a sleigh arrived with the *tovarishch*³ from the Communist Party district office. He ordered me to stop teaching, to dismiss the pupils, and to send them to call all the farmsteaders for a meeting in the school classroom.

For me it was a déjà vu scenario that I had experienced not long ago when I was teaching in the village of Nizhnyaya Krynka,⁴ and it was repeating again at this small farmstead. I had no choice—I had to obey the district authorities if I wanted to keep my position as a teacher.

Everywhere in the countryside it was a common practice to hold sham meetings organized by the Bolshevik Party district offices in the schools. Since the meetings required the service of a literate person, it was a common practice that the teacher, as a literate person, was expected to serve as a secretary to record the minutes of the meetings, as well as he was required to read aloud to the hostile peasants the numerous pages of cheap propaganda pamphlets about the good things that collectivization would bring them. In addition the teacher was forced to “volunteer” to act as the village agitator-propagandist, called by the name *agitprop*⁵, whose function the Bolshevik Party greatly emphasized.

Yes, the teacher was expected to “voluntarily” campaign for the *kolkhoz*, and he was forced to do this with the same enthusiasm as the farmers who were forced to “voluntarily” enroll in them—it was a distorted concept of *dobrovolnost*, which meant volunteerism. During Soviet times the people applied to it the coined phrase “*dobrovolno po prinuzhdyeniyu*,” which meant “voluntarily by coercion,” when they were forced to do something against their will.

The perverted concept of “*dobrovolno*,” was used everywhere and was applied in all situations where the Bolshevik Party and

the Soviet government wanted to officially document the resolutions of the meetings and to record that people were acting voluntarily—when they were really forced to do something they didn't want to do.

It was this kind of meeting that had to be held on our small farmstead, and the district collectivization agent wanted to be sure that all farmers would attend. He stood near the classroom door and ordered each pupil to call on all their neighbors and tell them to come immediately to school for a meeting. With happy shouting the children ran out of school, and on their way home they announced to the inhabitants, "*Dyadya!*"⁶ "*Tyetya!*"⁷ "Go to the meeting!" "Go to school!"

The news about the arrival of the comrade from a district office spread quickly on the farmstead and, being curious about the news he had to tell, most of the peasants were already on their way to school. At first, the classroom filled with a small audience of local peasants. Later, it filled to capacity with those arriving from the two other neighboring farmsteads.

A chairman of the meeting—who, as usual, was the farmstead representative—and the comrade from the district office—who was a district collectivization agent—pompously accommodated themselves at the teacher's desk. I placed one of the students' desks sideways near the window and squeezed myself onto the narrow seat ready to take the minutes of the meeting. The chairman opened the meeting by introducing the comrade district collectivization agent who was sent from a district office to make a speech about the organization of the *kolkhoz* and to ensure that the farmers would "voluntarily" vote for it.

The comrade district collectivization agent started his speech by praising the advantages of working in the *kolkhoz*, how to organize it, and about the happiness the peasants could find by working together in the collective farm. But most of all, he was trying to intimidate the farmsteaders and to confuse them. On one side, he was telling them that the membership in the *kolkhoz* was voluntary; then, on the other side, he was implying, "If you try not to volunteer, we, the Bolshevik Party, will show you...the consequences..."

When he finished his speech and sat down, the farmstead representative got up and asked, "Well, citizens-*muzhychky*,"⁸ do you have any questions?" The farmsteaders were silent. He

repeated the question several times, but the audience was silent. Then he tried another question, "Maybe somebody doesn't understand something?" Not one sound in reply. The farmstead representative tried another approach, "Maybe we will wait for a while. Maybe someone will think about some question..." In the classroom was such silence that one could not even hear the breathing of the people packed in the classroom—some sitting and some standing where they could find a spot.

"That's that, citizens; then you all understand about what comrade from the district told you," concluded the farmstead representative, embarrassed by the silence of the audience. Then he added, "This, of course, could be difficult right away. Well, we will wait for a while. You better try to think about it, citizens-*muzhichky*..." And he sat down to consult in a whisper with the district collectivization agent.

After a short consultation he got up and asked again, "Maybe someone would like to make some comments about the speech, and we will leave the questions for later?" The farmsteaders had their heads down, looking at the floor. After a long second consultation, the farmstead representative got up and asked, "If you don't ask any questions, does it mean that you have understood everything?" The silence persisted. It seemed that in the room there were only two people, the farmstead representative and the comrade from the district office, who from time to time consulted with each other about the stubborn silence of the farmsteaders.

The farmstead representative got up again and made the concluding statement, "That's it, citizens-*muzhychky*! Well, if you understand everything and don't have any questions, it means we will organize the kolkhoz!"

The farmsteaders began to slowly raise their lowered heads and to look at each other, but not one word or a sound was heard. Their faces showed obvious tension; their eyes showed an inner concentration, and their heavy breathing had broken the silence reigning for a long time in the room. But no one was talking.

The farmstead representative continued to talk slowly, "Well, citizens-*muzhychky*, how can I say it so that you would understand this? If it is a common consent, then the Soviet authorities, of course, welcome it. But if you are against it..." The district collectivization agent did not allow him to finish the

sentence by knocking with his fingers on the farmstead representative's back. As the farmstead representative had bent down to listen to the district collectivization agent, in one of the last rows someone's cane fell on the floor making a loud noise. All turned their heads toward the back of the room, but the one who disturbed the silence left the cane lying on the floor.

The farmstead representative again addressed the audience, "Well then, citizens-*muzhychky*, should we write that all of you are for the *kolkhoz*?"

The timid voice of the man in the last row, the one whose cane had fallen on the floor, broke the growing tension in the room, "What's the need to write? These *kolkhoz* are by the order from the authorities..." The audience broke the silence, and a low murmur filled the room.

Almost happy to hear the voice of the muzhyk, the district collectivization agent got up and asked in a stern voice, "So, comrades farmers, that's how you all think?"

The same timid voice answered, "Why do you ask us? If these *kolkhoz* are by the order from the authorities, why ask us?"

The farmstead representative hurried to explain the situation in plain words, "You see, citizens-*muzhychky*, this act is meant to be voluntary...it means...that's to say, voluntary by you, citizens-*muzhychky*...it's, to say, it is for your own discretion..."

The man with the timid voice was silent; he didn't dare answer again. The animation in the room ceased. Everybody understood that the "voluntary" act was such that one could not escape from it, like one cannot escape from death, want it or not; either way one had to perish. And with their silence the farmsteaders were trying to prolong the moment when they had to perish. The silence continued. Only the heavy breathing of the people sounded like a gasping breath of a huge wounded animal. The farmstead representative, who was chairman of the meeting, didn't know what to do next.

The district collectivization agent took over the meeting again, and he began to convince the peasants,

"Citizen-farmers, the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet government are constantly showing their care for your welfare, and they want that you, all farmers, should live well like the town-folks. They want that in every farmer's cottage shall shine the electric light bulb of Illich.⁹ They want to make your work

easier with the use of big agricultural machinery, which only kolkhoz could purchase, and which you, small individual farmers, would never be able to buy. Let's take an example, who among you could purchase a tractor today?

He took a long pause to allow the farmers to answer that question, but all were silent, and he answered it himself, "Nobody—it's clear. But, if you are in the kolkhoz, you will have a tractor. And if you have a tractor, your work would be much easier than your work now. And in general your life would be much better because there will be neither poor, nor rich, because everything will be distributed according to your work. Each will receive as much as he has contributed of his labor to the common kolkhoz workload. In other words, everything will be done with justice and fairness. Now, think well about your life, think about how much the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet government care about you..."

"What do you mean, citizen-comrade?" the farmsteader from the last row couldn't resist. "Who are we, according to you, are we some kind of children, or maybe crippled? Why does the party and the government have to provide care for us? Like we don't know when to sow the fields and when to harvest? Everything we do, citizen-comrade, goes according to the rules—in the spring we sow the fields; in the summer, we make hay; in the fall, we harvest.

"And about not having an electric 'light bulb of Illich,' we are better without it—earlier to bed, earlier to rise, right on time to go to the fields like it should be done by the true farmsteader... As for the tractor, it's the same. Give us, you know, not your care, but our freedom; then even the tractor will come out by itself. What do you think, citizen-comrade, that we muzhyks don't understand the machine? Do you think that all of us muzhyks are stupid? Do you really think that? Ask any one of us farmsteaders who would refuse the machine. All would buy it...but...we are afraid of authorities...because if one could afford to buy a tractor, they would consider him to be the *kulak*¹⁰. You know, citizen-comrade, with the horse it is safer, I mean, on one's mind there is no worry about being deported, you know where..."

The farmsteader stopped for a short while to take a breath and then continued with more conviction, "And about the justice I can tell you, too... You, town-dwellers, maybe don't recognize God,

but we, the farmers, think otherwise. There is nobody except God who could give just and fair reward for our farmer's labor. How one treats the soil, so the soil returns to him. If one looks after it well, his threshing floor will be full of grain. If one just pecks with a wooden or small plough, don't expect much reward for it, because God sees everything."

The farmsteaders were listening silently to every word, and many were nodding their heads in approval of what the muzhyk from one of the last rows in the room was telling. And he didn't stop; he continued to pour out the grievances that he had kept inside for a long time, "As for the human justice and fairness, we know all about it. We were promised many things during the revolution. And now, what has happened to all of them? And telling us that *kolkhoz* is voluntary, this we understand, too—they are ordered by the authorities, and there is no need to ask muzhyks about it. Drive us as a herd into it, because you have the power. We will labor there, too... What else can we do?" His voice broke off as he pronounced his last words, and he hopelessly put down his head.

The farmsteaders became excited—all eyes were on the one who had spelled out what was on their minds. They began to express their approval and to tell each other that they agreed with everything their farmstead-neighbor dared to say. They almost forgot about the two officials sitting at the teacher's desk.

While this outpouring of approval was going on, the district collectivization agent was talking with animation to the farmstead representative. Although the farmsteaders could not hear his arguments, one by one they figured out from his gestures that something was not right, and the room fell again into a tense silence, interrupted occasionally by someone's heavy and deep sigh.

Several agonizing minutes went by in this silence until the comrade district collectivization agent got up and addressed the meeting again.

"Citizen-farmers, here farmsteader Yepifanov substantially spoke against the Bolshevik Party and against the Soviet government. He himself doesn't want to become a member of *kolkhoz*, and by his speech he was agitating the other farmsteaders to follow his example. He was trying to sway from volunteering those who came here with a strong intention to

immediately organize the kolkhoz and become members of the collective farm where they would labor together with other farmers.

"I just found out from the farmstead representative some compromising facts about farmsteader Yepifanov. Although he himself is not a *kulak*, he keeps company with some of them. His ideas make one think that one of them speaks with his voice. And this 'someone' is a *kulak* who is probably hiding among you; he is the real enemy of the Soviet government and of the Bolshevik Party.

"We cannot tolerate this, and we certainly will investigate this. We will find out by any means who among you is conducting anti-Soviet propaganda. You should understand very well that all that citizen Yepifanov said here, all of it is directed against the Soviet authorities and against the Bolshevik Party. And I am warning you, such persons will receive severe punishment for their hostile activities.

"Remember that from now on, after this meeting, *podkulachnyky*,¹¹ like Yepifanov, should reconsider what they say, if they don't want to find themselves together with the *kulaks* somewhere far away from this farmstead. The Bolshevik Party will not tolerate private farms. The Bolshevik Party will not tolerate small capitalists in the village because they will pull the rest of the country toward capitalism. This you should understand yourself. For this reason you should vote now. If you are for socialism, then you should vote for the *kolkhoz*. If you are for the private farms, it means you are for capitalism."

Then he turned toward the farmstead representative and ordered, "Comrade Chairman, let's vote!"

The farmstead representative got up and tried his best to explain to the farmsteaders what they would be voting for and against today, "Well, citizens-*muzhychky*, just now comrade from the district office told you everything exactly. Now then, I think... because...I mean...to make it more understandable... to say it our way, our peasants' way... so it will be little bit more clearer... now then, if one raises a hand, he will be for the Soviet government. It means that he should not expect anything bad from the government, because he is its friend. But, if one does not raise a hand, he is against the Soviet government. It means he is its enemy, and he shall blame himself if something bad happens

to him. Well then, citizens-*muzhycky*, now we all will vote. You ought to raise your hands... we will all raise our hands... That means that nothing bad shall happen to you, to all of us... Do you understand citizens-*muzhycky*?"

The farmsteaders were silent.

"Well then, I mean, I am voting," stated the farmstead representative raising his hand. "Who is for the Soviet government, I mean, for *kolkhoz*? Raise your hands! Hurry up now! Raise your hands! Come on, *muzhycky*, raise your hands!"

Slowly and hesitantly the hands began to rise, but all heads were down. Everyone was afraid to look at his neighbor, like they were all committing some kind of hideous crime that each one wanted to hide from the others...

Although not all raised their hands, the resolution for organizing *kolkhoz* was declared as being accepted unanimously. But the report that was written by me, the secretary of the meeting, contained too many details. I was ordered to rewrite it as it was dictated by the district collectivization agent, who was responsible for the results. In the final polished report the comments by the farmsteader Yepifanov were not mentioned; nor were noted the openly expressed or implied threats of the district collectivization agent; nor the fear-implying explanations and constant prodding by the farmstead representative. At the end of the report I was ordered to write: "Kolkhoz was organized unanimously voluntarily."

The district collectivization agent departed for the district in a wonderful mood.

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1. See the chapter "Easter in the Catacombs."
 2. See the chapter "The Dispossessed."
 3. Comrade.
 4. See the chapter "In the Village School."
 5. Agitator-propagandist.
 6. Uncle, or any man, as used by common people.
 7. Aunt, or any woman, as used by common people.
 8. A plural of condescending and diminutive of *muzhyk*.
 9. According to the slogan by Vladimir Illich Lenin: "In every home

shall shine the electric light bulb of Illich."

10. Name coined by the Soviets for well-to-do farmers to scoff at them as the "enemies of the people."
11. *Kulak's* sympathizer.



The Dispossessed

By Orest M. Gladky

In trying to find somewhere to work, I traveled from Novosibirsk in Siberia to Taganrog on the Azov Sea, where I had an almost tragic outcome to my attempts to look for employment, and then to Caucasus—back and forth through my motherland that for me became a step-motherland. I lost count of how many places I went without success. Finally, I returned to my blessed Ukraine to try my luck once more after many vain attempts! I decided to settle down in the Donetsk region, not far from the coal mining hamlet of Snyezhnoye, where my wife and daughter lived.

Knowing that there was a shortage of teachers qualified to teach in Ukrainian, I specifically sought employment in the village school. To my surprise, thank God, at last I succeeded—they hired me on the spot. Probably, it was not easy to find a teacher for this godforsaken place because when I applied for a position as a teacher, they didn't even ask for documents about my education or professional credentials; not one question about where I had worked before; nor did they ask about my social-political background, as was usually done in all other places!

The small village school where I was assigned to teach and live was situated on top of a hill in the former landowner's house, which was surrounded by an old apple orchard. It was really a cottage, but larger than other cottages on the farmstead. The outer walls were whitewashed, and the small windows had green shutters.

At the bottom of the hill, along the road leading to the village called Bolshoye Kryepinskoye, was the farmstead, comprised of thirty-five scattered whitewashed peasants' cottages with thatched roofs and bright-colored shutters. The farmstead belonged to the district of Bolshoye Kryepinskoye of the Donetsk region, and the Soviet authorities had quite recently renamed it *Proletarskaya Volya* or Proletarian Freedom—a name that was completely inappropriate. In fact, it was a mockery to call it by

that name because there was not even one really poor peasant, and absolutely no proletarians lived there.

From the time I arrived there at the beginning of the school year until the beginning of winter, I got to know almost everybody who lived in those cottages, or, more truthfully speaking, in all cottages but one. That cottage stood apart from the others. Its tall gates were always bolted and wicket gate locked. I never saw even the shutters being opened in that cottage. One time when I showed some interest in it, the farmsteaders told me secretly that it belonged to the *raskulachenny*—the dispossessed.¹ From the way I was told about it, I felt that the dispossessed were like lepers—one shouldn't have contact with them—one could become "contaminated" and be condemned like them. No one spoke openly to me of this; no one warned me. It was my intuition acquired from the experience I had living in those difficult times.

It was almost midnight. I knew that at this hour everyone at the farmstead was asleep. Only I was pacing the room from corner to corner, alone with my thoughts, far away from the school, from the farmstead, and from everything else that surrounded me here. My thoughts were far, far away from the farmstead, from the dispossessed... My thoughts were with my family, with whom until now I hadn't dared to correspond, being afraid to "contaminate" them by being an outlaw... I felt almost like the dispossessed myself... Yes, dispossessed of all that was dear to me.

The worst part of my ordeal had ended only recently. And now I was in a warm room, while outside the walls there was hard December frost. Every now and then I could hear the crackling of tree branches on the old apple trees remaining in the orchard of the evicted landowner. No matter that my room had an earth floor; that the only table had but three legs and had to stand against the wall so it wouldn't fall down; that the only chair was tied in several places with cord and creaked when I sat down on it; that instead of a bed I had an old door raised on brick supports instead of legs; and that instead of a mattress there were ordinary sacks filled with straw. And no matter that on the kitchen stove I had a rusty old tin teapot, and hanging on the wall a common kerosene lamp. But I was free! And I had hope that soon the hour would come when I could once more see those dear to my heart...

I continued pacing the room with my thoughts far, far away from the farmstead, somewhere in the snowy fields where the slag heaps were piled up in high black *terricones*, where in the mines work never stopped, even at night. There, in a small hamlet of Snyezhnoye, adjacent to the coal mine, were my loved ones, my dear and near ones, my wife and my small daughter. My tormented heart was longing for them...

In the silence of the night I could not hear a sound from the farmstead; only the frost made its presence felt. I knew that nobody could come at that hour and disturb my peace. My peace? No, my solitude. But, hark! What was that? Someone was creeping about. I could clearly hear a creak of careful steps in the orchard. Who could it be? Who could be coming to see me at that late hour? And why was "someone" so careful about creeping through the snow?

Then I heard a careful knock on my small window. I went into the hall and opened the door without asking who it was. If it was a good person, he would do me no harm. If it was somebody with bad intentions, he could also come at daytime, or now break down the door, and, in any case, I had no means to defend myself...

As I opened the door, a woman wrapped in a warm shawl and wearing a huge *kozhuikh* with a turned-up collar entered swiftly. When she uncovered her face, I realized that I had never seen her on the farmstead before.

"I came to you," said the woman, who appeared apologetic and confused and was talking in short phrases pausing between them. "You see... I have received a letter... From my husband... I am illiterate..." And she handed me a small postcard covered with many postal seals.

I asked her to sit down. On the postcard were several writings: "*Provereno*," which meant it had been passed by the censor. On the stamp the seal was from the town of Kyem² in Siberia. So, it became clear to me that this was the woman who lived in the cottage that stood alone apart from the others—that she was one of the dispossessed, who was looked upon and avoided as a leper by all the farmsteaders. They were not only afraid to speak to her but also even to see her, although on the farmstead almost all were interrelated. And she remained shut up in her cottage because she knew how dangerous it was for anyone to have

contact with her.

I turned the postcard to another side. There was some clumsy writing in large letters, and in the middle of it was a water spot that made the letters run. The woman explained, "I cried... maybe now you can't make sense of it...you know, that's from my husband..."

"Don't you worry, I will decipher it," I comforted her.

Then leaning on the windowsill, because I had no other chair to sit in, I began to read what was written half in Russian and half in Ukrainian: "Dear ones, I am working up to my knees in a swamp. We cut the trees. I lost all of my teeth. Send me garlic or onions." There was no room left to write the usual peasant's greetings. Maybe he was not even thinking about it.

The woman's eyes had filled with tears that glittered with the rainbow colors reflecting the light of the kerosene lamp. Those were transparent tears, but I knew how bitter they could be...

"I want to write to him, but I don't know how... I am illiterate," she told me.

"Let me write it for you," I offered.

"But aren't you afraid? You know, we are *raskulachyenny*," she warned me.

"Who would know about it?" I asked her.

"God forbid, I shall not tell anyone!" she answered hurriedly.

"I didn't think about you," I told her. "I was wondering if anyone saw you coming here."

"No! No! I was very careful. That's why I came so late at night when all are asleep. I saw the light in your window..." The poor woman tried to reassure me. And she added, "I want to send him a small parcel..."

"Have you enough to eat yourself?" I asked.

"God is merciful—we are not dying of hunger so far."

"Well, you get it ready, and I will help you with the parcel as well," I promised her. "In the meantime, tell me what to write to your husband."

The woman began to tell me the many things she wanted to say to this dearest person. And I did my best to put it in as few words as possible—all that she wanted to tell her dear one. The letter was quickly finished. The woman got up and began to pull out presents from her pockets to pay me for my work. They were some kind of flat cakes made from coarsely ground wheat grain.

"They are not bad... They taste good...we bake them in the ashes...because we are afraid to make a fire in the stove...they are really tasty!" she said with reassurance.

"No! No!" I refused and with difficulty persuaded her to take them back.

The unexpected night visitor went away as quietly as she had come. And my thoughts returned to agitate me. My wound had opened up again, and I felt sharp pain in my heart. The sleepless night awaiting me did not frighten me. I was finding consolation in my torment.

A few nights later—when the farmstead was already in deep sleep and only I, as usual, was pacing the room and my thoughts were far, far away from everything that was around me at that late hour—again someone tapped in the same cautious way on my little window. I understood that it was the dispossessed woman. Yes, it was she. This time she brought a small parcel in which she was sending her husband garlic, warm underwear, and some kind of herbs unknown to me. I wrote on the parcel the postcard address, the woman thanked me and quickly went away. She knew very well that if somebody had seen her coming here, I could pay for it with my liberty the same way as her husband. After this visit I didn't see her anymore for several weeks.

One day I was returning from a daily stroll and stopped near the farmstead representative's cottage, where, as usual, farmsteaders were gathered. They were waiting for him to return from a district office to find out all the news. I listened to the farmsteaders, who were discussing the burning topic in those days, "collectivization."³ Suddenly somebody pronounced, "Tymokha⁴ is coming!"

All turned their heads in the direction of the road where, at the beginning of the farmstead, someone was coming. He was walking in an uneven gait, staggering along the way, making one big step, then stopping, and then continuing the jerky walk. He carried a long stick, with which he seemed to measure the road in front of him. When he reached the cottage of the dispossessed, he stopped, turned himself toward it, raised his stick and threatened somebody invisible, and then continued to walk toward us.

When he came closer, the farmsteaders got silent. All their attention was now on this man. At that moment I realized that he

was a stranger whom I never saw before in the farmstead. He was wearing a half-length sheepskin coat, high hunting boots, and on his head, an old sheepskin hat. He was not old yet, although his face was covered with fine wrinkles, and coarse gray hair was sticking out from his long moustache.

When he came close to the crowd, it seemed that he didn't intend to stop. But then he seemed to change his mind and said with a smile, "Hul-lo, *muzhychky*!"⁵

"Hullo, hullo, Tymofyey Terentyevich!" answered the farmsteaders, vying with each other.

One of them asked, "Are you just returning from a district office, Tymofyey Terentyevich?"

Because of the respectful way the farmsteaders were addressing this man, I understood that he was not an ordinary muzhyk but one who knew what was going on in the farmstead and maybe in a district office.

Meanwhile Tymokha wasn't hurrying in answering the question. Instead he dropped a derisive hint to the crowd, "Well-well-well, *kolkhozniky*,⁶ are you discussing the dispossessed cottage?"

The farmsteaders answered in tune with each other, "What about the cottage?"

"It's the folks who live there!" said one.

"Maybe they are dead from hunger by now!" said another.

"Or frozen to death!" added the third one, "You see, there is no smoke from the chimney to be seen day or night."

Tymokha listened to them with an ironic expression on his face and then ridiculed them profusely, "How clever! They are de-e-ad!" He mocked their words.

The farmsteaders listened to Tymokha in silence. I understood that they were afraid to say the wrong thing to him.

"Ha-ha-ha!" he laughed and stated, "They will outlive you all! What kind of tales are you telling me about the dispossessed, you cranks? De-e-ad! Those folks? H-ha-ha! You don't know what Tymokha knows! Their chimney is feeding them, you nitwits! It is like in the old times. One lived, and the other lived till he had food; one barely moved his legs, and the other rode on his back! The people were stupid, didn't know any better. Even today not too many clever ones could be found among you. You are sorry for the dispossessed! You ignorant folks! You haven't seen

enough evil in this world! The time has come now to become somebody, but you want to remain muck worms!”

The farmsteaders still listened, as he continued to preach to them, “Kulaks will die anyway. We will see to it!” And Tymokha raised his cane again and made a threatening gesture in the direction of the dispossessed cottage. “Remember, it’s me, Tymokha, who is telling you this! Because—kulak is the first enemy of muzhyk. And you slobber about them! *Mu-u-zhy-y-ky!*” He spoke to them this time with derision about their political ignorance. And Tymokha mockingly imitated them by ridiculing one more time, “It’s the folks who live there. ... ‘Maybe dead from hunger by now!’” And then he added, “Maybe you start sniveling now like women!”

After a short pause he continued, but this time hammering each word distinctly. “You don’t know what Tymokha knows. They have enough to guzzle for as long as they live.” Then he added with a grin on his face, “But their business is closed now! Tomorrow it will come out where kulaks are hiding their wheat. They will get their wheat! U-u-uh! And kulak’s children! They will get what they deserve!” Then he cursed.

The farmsteaders stood silent. Tymokha’s words reminded them that what would happen tomorrow to the dispossessed could happen to each one of them—because none of them on this farmstead was really poor. When the district authorities were ordered to collect the so-called “excess” of grain from all peasants, all of them had hidden their grain, as much and wherever they could.

Tymokha cursed several times, changing with gusto swearing words while threatening again with his raised stick toward the dispossessed cottage. Then, without saluting, he walked toward the farmstead where he lived.

When he walked by me, I smelled vodka on his breath. The farmsteaders told me that he was never completely sober. But he was a very good master—all brick stoves in the neighboring villages and farmsteads had been made by his hands. But I couldn’t understand his threatening toward the dispossessed cottage and the puzzling comments of the farmsteaders, spoken intermittently.

“Tymokha doesn’t throw his words on the wind!”

“Yes, he had his hands in that brick stove...”

"Sure, muzhyks, a peasant's stove is a very large construction!"

"If Tymokha talks about wheat, it means that he knows something about it!"

"Y-a-a-h—there will be a search..."

"If they search—they will find it!"

The following day was Christmas Eve. But, although the farmsteaders were religious, the earthly events of those years moved them farther away from God. And maybe because of that in those troubled days, Christmas holidays were beginning with a general feeling of uneasiness and vague gloomy presentiment of a nearing inevitable misfortune. Though in every cottage there were preparations according to all Orthodox traditions, the approaching big holiday was not felt as usual by the farmsteaders.

That morning, during school hours, my pupils suddenly turned their heads toward the windows, and we saw a sled driving up to the front door of the schoolhouse. The overdriven horses stopped, emitting puffs of steam from their noses. In a few moments the doors were flung open, and a man all covered with snow appeared on the threshold and asked me, "Are you the teacher?"

"Yes, I am the teacher," I answered.

"Dismiss the pupils!" he ordered me. "Come with me to the farmstead!"

"Very well," I answered, knowing that to argue with the authorities was senseless.

Once, when I was working in another village, I complained and asked my inspector in the *Narobras*⁷ office what to do in case someone from the Soviet authorities came to me and asked me to close the school because they needed to conduct a meeting. His answer was very cumbersome and unclear, "As you know, dear, when the comrades tell you to do something... Time is now like this...you should try to accommodate all this at your place...I really cannot help you. There is no universal answer to this problem, each situation is different... Dialectically to say it...it depends on who, how, and for what reason..."

From his answer I understood that the inspector had no power to prevent the use of the school building, or the services of the teachers from the stream of agents empowered by the Soviet authorities. Therefore, I obeyed.

That whole day I spent in the neighboring farmsteads, sometimes acting as a secretary for the meeting conducted by the District Collectivization agent or reading to the farmsteaders propaganda literature about the virtues of the kolkhoz.⁸

It was getting dark when we returned to our farmstead. The snowstorm that had started in the afternoon was now raging with all its might. The northeasterly wind was blowing stinging snow in our faces. We all were glad to finally get to a warm place, although I knew that my room remained without heat the whole day. One would think that in such weather nobody would drive to this place. But I was wrong.

Our sleds stopped near the farmstead representative's cottage, where we almost bumped into the light sleigh that had just arrived with some new visitors. From underneath a white lump of snow one man emerged, followed by another. The first jumped down from the sled, shook the snow from his long sheepskin coat, cursed at the weather, and turned down his high fur collar, disclosing the uniform cap of a GPU agent.

"Well, why are you standing there?" he asked the other one, who appeared to be just an ordinary driver.

Then he shouted to all of us, "Let's go in and get warm!" And he hurriedly ran into the cottage of the farmstead representative. It was obvious that it wasn't the first time he had been here and that he knew who lived in that cottage.

The District Collectivization agent followed the GPU agent into the cottage, and I had to follow them, too, as there was still work for me to do. I had to write a polished record of the proceedings of the peasants' meetings by getting rid of all the "useless" negative details that, according to the District Collectivization agent, "were of no interest" to the Bolshevik Party masters.

As we entered the room, the GPU agent was standing near the stove, rubbing his frozen hands. He recognized the District Collectivization agent and told him, "Tonight we will evict the Morozovs." I recognized the name. I had written it on the letter and on the parcel that was to be mailed to faraway Kyem.

"Morozovs? Which Morozovs?" asked the farmstead representative in a surprised voice.

"Those dispossessed whose muzhyk was sent up north. His wife is still here," the GPU agent replied.

"But she has small children and an old mother," remarked the

farmstead representative cautiously.

"That's not our business!" the GPU agent answered sharply.

"It's long overdue," commented the District Collectivization agent and added, "Look how they make themselves at home here! Degenerate kulaks! They are only making trouble influencing the rest of the farmsteaders. That's why muzhyks are fussing about and don't want to go into kolkhoz."

"Certainly, it's kulaks' propaganda! It is clear, they should have been removed a long time ago!" remarked the GPU agent and then added, addressing the farmstead representative, "We ought to warm up after that cold journey. Haven't you any vodka?"

"Of course, we have!" answered the farmstead representative hurriedly. "For such an occasion we always keep in reserve all that is necessary! We know very well that in this cold winter only vodka could warm you up! Hey, *baba*,⁹" he bossingly called his wife, "hurry up! Don't dawdle up there, put everything on the table at once!"

A one-liter bottle of vodka immediately appeared on the table. The wife of the farmstead representative was used to entertaining such important guests and hurried up with a piece of salted lard, sauerkraut, pickles, and homemade bread. All sat at the table and had a glassful of vodka followed by a light repast. But the GPU agent didn't allow them to indulge in drinking more and ordered in an authoritative manner, "That's enough! Let's go first to the Morozovs!"

All got up and silently began to put on their coats. The District Collectivization agent indicated with a gesture that I, too, should come with them, because all this had to be documented, and a report for the authorities had to be written according to the rules.

As we came closer to the dispossessed cottage, Tymokha appeared. It was hard to say when he'd arrived, but I don't remember having seen him at the farmstead representative's cottage or on the street.

At the knocking at the shutters by the GPU agent, there was no answer for a long time. We all stood silently waiting. The agent knocked again and again. There was silence, as if all the inhabitants were dead and the cottage was empty.

"Knock! Go on, knock!" Tymokha encouraged him, and he himself began to bang on the locked shutters.

In a few minutes the wicket gate squeaked, and a woman

appeared. I recognized her voice—it was the same woman who had twice come to see me. She didn't see me in the dark. She opened the gate and stepped aside, letting us pass through and then, as a good property owner, carefully closed the wicket gate and hastened to open the cottage door for us.

The cottage, like all peasants' cottages, had two big rooms with the huge stove and a wide chimney wall dividing them. In the first room was a small oil lamp. Its dim, oscillating light was not sufficient and left the room in semi-darkness. Even in the poor light one could see very simple furnishings, the same as in any other cottage on the farmstead.

Two girls were sitting on the floor. One was about five or six years old, and the other, about two-and-a-half or three. It was difficult to see what they were doing. On a big, high wooden bed, an old woman was sitting, knitting something with trembling hands.

After we entered the room, the woman closed the door carefully and stood silently there, observing us. Perhaps she recognized me, but she didn't betray me even with the slightest gesture. But most probably, she was confused and scared to see so many men coming into her cottage uninvited. I longed to warn her in some way about the approaching misfortune, but there was no way of doing so. And then, my warning would not help her. It was too late!

"Well, *kulachka*,¹⁰ where do you keep your wheat?" asked the GPU agent.

"What wheat?" answered the woman calmly.

"The wheat you have hidden with your husband!" he shouted.

The woman swiftly glanced over the uninvited people, and, for a moment, her eyes rested on Tymokha. It seemed to me that she'd guessed why the stove-maker was there. But she simply repeated once more, "What wheat?"

"Don't sham! Tell us where it is hidden!" the GPU agent insisted.

This time the woman didn't even answer.

"You!!" the GPU agent abused her with cursing. "Where is the wheat?"

Composed and calm, she dared to tell him straightforward, "What can I say? If you know where it is, there is no reason to ask me—just take it."

The GPU agent came close to the chimney wall and began to tap with his knuckles here and there. The sound changed from one place to another; in a hollow place the sound was clear; in a packed place it was toneless.

Tymokha came closer to the wall and prompted the GPU agent, "Here, comrade, here... right, here! Hit here, hit! It is here, I am telling you!" He tapped on the wall again and asked, "Don't you hear it?"

The GPU agent saw the hatchet in Tymokha's hand, grabbed it, and started to chip at the brick wall. After a while the brick cracked, and from the hole a golden stream of wheat grains started to pour on the earthen floor...

"You!" The GPU agent discharged several curses on the woman. "You, kulak's rogue!"

The others joined the agent in a choir of abuse:

"Here, here, this is how they live, these *kulachky*!"¹¹

"You see, they are hiding themselves!"

But Tymokha's mocking was the most notable. "They don't have any whe-e-at!"

I was observing what was going on in silence. I knew that I was needed only to write a report that the wheat had been found here.

And I was needed not only because many agents didn't know how to write, but also because it was an established rule that each party boss and GPU agent would give orders, but he should have some literate person write and rewrite all reports and account for their deeds, eliminating all the ugly details. Only in special political cases where it was not desirable to have witnesses, would the GPU agents write the reports themselves.

The woman still stood silently by the door. She was calm and expressionless, as in a trance; not a muscle moved on her face. Did she anticipate what she and her family would have to endure? Did she realize what terrible thing was to happen at any moment to her, her children, and her old mother? Could she even have guessed what was going to happen? Of course not. Even I couldn't. She didn't know anything, because nobody could have warned her about it. And why warn her? What could have been changed? Could she have saved herself from a disaster? And if someone had dared to tell her the terrible truth, would he not have become one more unfortunate victim? No, nobody would

have risked warning her!

"Get out of here!!!" the GPU agent suddenly bellowed at the woman, so loud that one could not recognize his voice.

The woman opened her eyes wide but asked him as quietly as before, "From where?"

The GPU agent screamed again, "From here! Get out of this cottage! And never set foot here again!"

"Where would we go? It is almost night... there is a snowstorm...and my small children...," she was talking so softly that one barely could hear her voice.

The brutal GPU agent didn't hear her and didn't want to hear her. He continued to scream at her even louder, "Get out!!! Get out of here!!!"

"My children...my old mother..." was pleading the woman.

"Your whelps are not my business! Get out of here, you, carrion! Out! Out! Not even the smell of you should be left here! Out!!! Out!!!" screamed the GPU agent at the top of his lungs.

The woman again repeated softly and quietly, "Where I would go? ...Small children, ...old mother... Where could I go with them?... Where?"

The impatient GPU agent jumped in front of her, pointing to the door, "Out!!! Out!!! Out!!!"

The woman dared once more to say, "Where?"

The enraged GPU agent threatened her with his raised fist. "Shut up! Gather your vile creatures! Or else I will throw them and you out in the snow myself!"

The scared children were looking at their mother. They were so terrified they could not even cry. They could not understand what was going on but felt that something terrible was happening. The old mother got up from the bed and began to collect the small pieces of wood scattered near the stove in a basket. Even the District Collectivization agent seemed uneasy and went into the other room to observe as the golden, fine stream of wheat grain poured out on the floor.

Silently the woman began to dress her children. With shaking hands she tied the knots on their kerchiefs and the leather ties on their sheepskin coats. Then she put on her children's feet small felt boots, got dressed herself, and helped her mother to tie a knot on her kerchief.

While the woman was dressing her children and herself, the

furious GPU agent paced around her, swinging his fists near her face and relentlessly abusing her by disgorging blasphemous expletives intended to make her hurry up.

Both the District Collectivization agent and the farmstead representative remained in the other room, where they were giving the impression of inspecting the hole in the chimney wall and making comments about the growing pile of wheat grain on the floor. Tymokha stood near the stove and, with obvious pleasure, watched and listened as the GPU agent was abusing the woman.

I had to remain near the table to take notes as instructed. I watched those poor children with pity. I don't know whose heart bled most in pain for them—their mother's or mine. It seemed to me that she still didn't realize all the horrors that awaited her beyond the doors of the cottage. My mind was trying to find some way to help the poor woman, but I knew there was nothing I could do for her with all those malevolent men around. They represented danger for me as well, as I had just recently endured my own tragic encounter with GPU agents.

When the woman got everybody bundled up, she turned toward the corner—where dark icons covered with soot from the stove smock were hanging—and crossed herself, bowing almost to the ground. Then she got a handful of wheat grain from the bowl on the cupboard and put it in her pocket, looked around on the walls of her cottage, and faintly said, "Farewell..."

As the woman with the small children and old mother walked outside into the snow, everyone followed her in silence. The snowstorm had turned into a blizzard. Without looking back, the dispossessed started on the road leading to the railroad station. The steep road going up the hill was now invisible behind the whirling vortexes of snow. The banished quickly disappeared behind the white haze.

For a while we all stood silently near the empty cottage, looking in the direction of the road, though the banished could no longer be seen. Even the GPU agent was suddenly speechless as he was trying to see with strained attention beyond the impenetrable whiteness; he probably was trying to make sure that the woman would not come back. It was hard to guess what kind of thoughts were passing through his criminal mind at that time. Was he thinking about the wasted lives? Was it possible that his heart was

reproaching him for the evil that he had done? Maybe he heard his conscience and realized the evil that he had disseminated around him. Or maybe he was planning his next terrible deed. It is hard to understand the heart and soul of an inveterate criminal! I was afraid to even think about it.

Nobody was talking; all were engrossed in their own thoughts, which they did not dare pronounce aloud. Then, finally, the farmstead representative broke the silence by reminding everybody, "To think about it, it is twenty-five miles to the railroad station!"

The GPU agent, trying to be cheerful, commented with irony in his voice, "Let's go, comrades—we shall drink for the 'salvation of their souls.'" Then, with a voice in which there was no more anger, as though he had completely forgotten what he had just done, he said, "Let's go to the farmstead representative's house." Now he had a desire only to warm up with a drink of vodka, and he added with the insistence, "Let's go! Let's go! We shall finish what was left in the bottle."

But the GPU agent's indifference was only temporary. After I finished writing his report at the farmstead representative's house and saluted everybody, I heard him say, "The dogs deserve the dogs' death!"

As I was walking toward the school where I lived, all kinds of ideas were going through my mind. "Maybe I could follow the banished family and stop them... and offer them to wait in the school till the blizzard was over... But how I could find them? One cannot see the road—it is just one white extension of drifting snow—and the footsteps are covered as soon as one's foot is raised... It's impossible to even find in which direction they were headed... If I try to call them, the sound of my voice would be lost in the whirls of the snowy wind." I felt powerless. The only hope was that the Almighty would show them the road and protect them...

That night I couldn't close my eyes. I was listening to the sounds of the wind, hoping to hear the light knocking on my windows by the poor woman seeking refuge... I was thinking, "Why was the poor woman so submissive? Why didn't she show to her executioners her tears and her sufferings? When she came to me with a letter from her husband, she did not hide her tears... Why then now didn't she cry and implore the cruel gpu agent at

least to remain in the cottage until the blizzard was over? Was she mesmerized by his shouts and abuse, or was she protecting her children from being abused by taking it all upon herself? ...Or maybe she realized that nothing could touch the people with the animal hearts. Probably it was the strength of a mother that kept her calm and composed during the ordeal..." I was lying on my bed with my eyes open and had a vision of two crying children and two lamenting women wandering in the blizzard...

The blizzard raged all night. Even the GPU agent and the District Collectivization agent stayed overnight on the farmstead, not departing until early in the morning.

Christmas arrived. Somebody from the neighboring village came to visit their relatives in our farmstead and brought the latest news, which quickly spread on the farmstead.

The frozen bodies of two women and two children were found beyond the village on the side of the road leading to the railroad station. The two women were lying in a snowdrift next to each other, and the mother was holding the two small girls in her arms, as if protecting those little angels... Their faces were so peaceful, like they were asleep... They said that nobody knows who they were because they had no documents on them. And everybody was wondering why they were on the road in that kind of a blizzard.

The cottage of the dispossessed stood there with its closed shutters and wide-open wicket gate. It was not hard for the farmsteaders to guess what had happened to their neighbors. But nobody knew for sure, except the three of us, the farmstead representative, Tymokha, and I. But we were not talking. Probably one day Tymokha would spill the truth. He would be drunk and would start to brag in front of the homesteaders about what had happened that night, reassuring them that he was telling the truth, "I am telling you, Tymokha knows!"

In about two weeks I was leaving the homestead Proletarian Freedom. On the railroad station Matvyeyev Kurgan, I was waiting for a train. Right before the departure of the train, I saw the dispossessed woman with the mother and children. I was able only to find out that good people had helped her—"the latest news" from the neighboring village had covered their tracks from the Soviet watchdogs—and she was traveling now to one of the towns in the south of Russia, where her brother lived.

I felt relieved from the heavy weight in my heart...

1. Dispossessed well-to-do farmer.
2. A town in Siberia where many concentration camps were located.
3. Forced transfer from private to the collective ownership of farmland.
4. Nickname for the name Tymofyey.
5. Plural and benevolent diminutive of muzhyk.
6. Collective farmers.
7. *Otdyel Narodnogo Obrasovaniya*—The Office of Popular Education.
8. *Kollektivnoye khozyaistvo*—Collective farm.
9. Woman (in Ukrainian.)
10. Feminine of word kulak.
11. Diminutive and derisive form of name kulak.



Children's Health Resort in Crimea

By Olga Gladky Verro

In the fall of 1929, we finally received a letter from my father. He notified us that he was working as a teacher in a village school and living on the farmstead called Proletarskaya Volya¹ that was also located in Donbas. He wrote that he missed us very much and promised to come for a couple of days at the beginning of October. I waited impatiently for his visit.

When he arrived, I was very happy to see him after the long separation, but I was disappointed right away because he was already talking about departing again. But he promised to come and see us when the schools were out for vacation. It was during that visit, on the third of October, that we went down the hill to the village of Snyezhnoye to the photographer's studio to have a picture made of the three of us.² The next morning he left again.

From then on during the long winter, he wrote to us regularly, and especially to me. In his letters he included pictures of the farmstead in the fall and later in the winter, covered with snow. I responded to my father by drawing big pictures and writing new words and short sentences that I was learning to write under my mother's guidance. However, the intensive correspondence between him and me was not a substitute for him being close to me in person, and I was constantly annoying my mother asking why Papa could not find work here and live with us. My mother told me that she was trying hard to find him a teaching position in the local schools.

In the winter of 1930, my mother found out that she could send me free for one month to the children's health resort in Crimea. She immediately applied with the administration of Gorpromuch³ for a free accommodation in the summer for me in a health resort with facilities for therapy treatment, called *sanatoriy*. But since I was not yet of school age, I received accommodations

for the early spring instead. My mother had to get permission to take me to the health resort in Yevpatoria, a town in Crimea on the southern shore of the Black Sea. Since I was to be discharged before the school year was over, my father agreed that after one month he would go and bring me back home. When my mother told me this big news, just hearing that I would see my father soon made me very happy, and I was full of joy during our long trip to Yevpatoria.

It was another matter when we arrived at the health resort and I had to say goodbye to my mother. When the resort instructor tried to take me from my mother, I felt terribly scared that, like my father, I would not see my mother anymore. I grabbed around her body with both hands and started to scream, "No! No! No!" Two people had to pull me from her and forcefully lead me out of the registration office, while I continued to scream.

I was led to the processing room, where there were many other screaming children. One by one, boys and girls all had a complete haircut, leaving us girls looking like boys. Then we were undressed by the women aides, bathed in the bathtubs and scrubbed with sponges, weighed by the nurse, and examined by several doctors, all dressed in white uniforms. Finally, we were given the resort uniforms and were ordered to dress up. Each of us was assigned a bed in one of two huge rooms, one for the girls and the other for the boys.

The resort was a long, white, one-story building with a patio that extended half its length on the backside of the building, and there was a large fenced courtyard. Beyond the low fence dividing it from the seashore, there was a nice sandy beach. Many trees of different kinds—not growing in the Ukraine and unknown to me—surrounded the building.

From the first day the children were drilled to get used to the strict daily schedule and routine for all activities conducted under the guidance of resort instructors. For me, used to being free at home to do anything I wanted at any time with my friends, it was hard to be constantly told what I had to do. But after a few days, I got used to the daily routine and began to slowly accept without resentment the strict discipline imposed on us.

At seven o'clock in the morning, we all had to get up at the same time, wash our faces in the long washroom with many faucets, dress ourselves in the uniforms, come out in the

courtyard, forming neat rows facing the sea, and for about fifteen minutes follow the instructor's commands for physical exercises. After that we would go to the patio and sit at an assigned table for a breakfast that always included a glass of milk. On some days we had a soft or hard-boiled egg and buttered bread; on other days we had some cooked cereal, like cream of wheat.

After breakfast we would go just across the courtyard to the beach wearing only our shorts for sunbathing. At the sound of a whistle, we had to lie down on the sand on one side, and on the next whistle, to turn all together to another side, then on the belly, then on the back. The sunbathing was gradually increased from five minutes all together on the first day to probably five minutes on each side after one week. At the sound of a whistle, we had to get up, form a line on the edge of the water, holding each other's hands, with instructors on both ends and in the middle. At the next whistle, we had to advance slowly into incoming foamy waves, and at command of the instructor's whistle, to immerse all together in the water. Only after we were wet did they allow us to splash for a short period in the shallow water close to the shore. They did not teach us how to swim.

For those children who needed special cures or therapy, it was provided either in the morning or in the afternoon. Lunch was early, by twelve o'clock. We usually had a soup of some kind, a piece of bread, meat or fish, and some kind of kasha,⁴ or potatoes, and at the end of the meal, there was a dessert, mostly some kind of fruit *kissyel*⁵ or pudding. After lunch we all had to take a one-hour nap in our beds, and silence was strictly enforced.

In the afternoon we had long walks under the shade of the trees in the park that was shared with the other health resorts. We had to march in pairs and sing the songs of the Young Pioneers,⁶ or revolutionary songs. All activities were conducted in small or large groups and always directed by the instructors. After the walk we would play ball or other group games in shaded parts of the courtyard.

One of the group games that I liked very much was called *zhmurky*,⁷ where one child was blindfolded and had to catch someone and guess who it was. Another game was called *Anu-ka otgaday*,⁸ it was a group game where all children would sit on the ground in a circle holding both hands like in a prayer and one child, called the "giver," would go around holding a very small

object between his palms. He would insert his hands between the palms of all children who were sitting and at some point leave the object with one of them. Another child, called the “guesser,” was supposed to guess who had received the object. When he found the right person, that person became the “guesser,” and he became the new “giver.”

One of the preferred games by most children was called *Mostik*⁹, in which the children stood in pairs with one arm up and holding the partner’s hand, forming a passageway. One child would be without a partner, and he would run through the passage, selecting a partner, and they would come out to stay at the front. The child who remained without a partner then started to run. Only before supper did we have some time for completely free, non-directed activities—socializing, talking, or playing with the other children.

For supper they gave us cream of wheat, rice pudding, or other porridge and a glass of milk. After supper they divided the children into age groups, and one of the instructors would read us stories from books. Many times they read to us poetry from the famous classical Russian writers, such as Alexander Sergyeyevich Pushkin, or the fables by Ivan Andryeyevich Krylov. But mostly they read us stories about the young pioneers and their brave deeds for the good of the Communist Party and the Soviet State, or about how “our Father Stalin” was good to small children.

By eight o’clock we were all in bed, with the only lights on near the bathroom doors. This was the hardest time for me to lie in bed with open eyes and turn from one side to another, not being able to fall asleep because, at home, from the time I was a small child, I used to stay up late, sharing this time with my parents. The silence here was strictly enforced, and most of the children were sound asleep very quickly, but not me. To pass the time I would walk very slowly several times to the bathroom until one of the night instructors would ask me if I was not feeling well and would accompany me to bed. Then I had to remain in bed feeling lonely and missing my parents terribly. I was imagining that both parents had abandoned me and would never come to take me home. Then I would remember my mother’s words, “Papa will come to take you home.” As soon as I would start to think about seeing my father, my fears would slowly dissipate and make my sleepless hours more bearable until I was able to fall

asleep.

But during the day I had a more positive outlook because every morning I annoyed the instructors by asking them how many days remained until we would go home. And since I was already able to count, I knew that the waiting period until my father would come was becoming shorter every day. During the last days before the end of our term at the health resort, the anticipation of seeing my father became more intense, but the doubts that nobody would come for me were also renewed with more frequency during the night, leaving me irritable and disobedient to the orders of the instructors in the morning.

Finally, the evening before the day of our departure, my father arrived and came to see me. I was allowed to stay with him after supper instead of listening to the stories. But when the time came to go to bed, I would not let my father leave and had tantrums, crying and screaming, making it hard for everybody. Finally, my father found the solution by telling me that he would sit on the terrace where I could see him from the window of my room. I was allowed by the instructor to stay near the window and watch him for a while and then to lie down on my bed and to check on him once in a while when I wanted to. I remember seeing his contours against the night sky of the southern shore of the Black Sea.

When I woke up in the morning, there were many parents in the courtyard waiting to take their children home. And I saw my father—Oh! What a relief!—he was sitting on the terrace waiting for me. In a hurry I had my breakfast and changed from the resort uniform into my own clothes. My father was prompting me, “Go and say goodbye to the instructors.”

But I categorically refused to do it by telling him, “I don’t care about any of them! I am tired of hearing their commands of what we have to do next!”

“Don’t you want to say goodbye to your friends?” he asked.

I looked around in the crowd of anxious children who were trying to find their parents and answered, “The instructors did not let us make friends because we had always to stay in a group. I don’t have anybody special to make a fuss about in leaving this place.”

“Didn’t you like to stay here at all?” wondered my father.

“Well, I liked to go to the beach and play in the water,” I answered, “because they let us to play free for a while.”

As we were waiting for the train, I asked my father if he would now stay with us in Snyezhnoye. My father never lied to me, even when he knew that the truth would not please me. He usually tried to explain the reason for his answers, hoping that it would make sense in my child's mind. So, he hoped that it would work this time also and said, "Not yet. I have to finish the school year in the village. I cannot leave before the summer vacation starts. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I answered. But my fear of losing him again came over me, and I became nervous and capricious. I started to annoy him to buy me a pastry. We went to the buffet inside the railroad station and found that there were no pastries in the display case. My father asked the sales clerk if they had any hidden in the storage. The answer was, "No. We are out of pastries." I started to whimper and fuss, and there was no way my father could stop me until the time came to board our train.

While my father was looking for a comfortable place for us to sit, I was distracted from annoying him. But as soon as we settled down, I resumed my whining, "I want a pastry...buy me a pastry..." My father was trying to calm me down by reasoning with me that there was no place that he could buy it until we arrived at the station where we had to change trains. But I continued to whine, and he was embarrassed in front of the other passengers.

Sitting near the window on the opposite bench of our compartment was a military officer. After listening to my whimpering for some time, he got up, reached for his suitcase on the luggage shelf, placed it on the small train table near the window, carefully removed from a cardboard box a beautiful éclair covered with chocolate, and handed it to me. To the surprise of the generous man, and of my father, and of the rest of the passengers in the compartment, I refused to take it and declared stubbornly, "No! I don't want your pastry. My father has to buy it for me!"

"Well," said the officer in a very business-like manner, looking at my father, "Do you want to buy this pastry from me for your daughter? It cost one ruble."

My father smiled in agreement, thanked him ceremoniously for his generosity, and then pulled out from his pocket one ruble; he handed it to the officer, who gave him the pastry. Only then I

accepted the pastry from my father and sat close to him, liking the chocolate and sucking the sweet filling from the inside.

Soon after this incident, the officer arrived at his destination, and I immediately climbed on the empty seat near the open window. I stood up holding my arms on the edge of the glass and enjoyed catching the wind in my face. At that time of the year in Crimea, the temperature was pleasant, and my father was not worried about me catching a cold. I was mesmerized by running by me trees, houses, and fields, and I stayed at the window watching the ever-changing landscape until we arrived at the station where we had to change trains.

At that station we had to wait several hours for the connecting train to arrive. My father bought some hard candies at the station's buffet, and we went to the small public garden nearby and sat on the bench to wait. As I was munching one candy after another, some small pieces fell on the ground, and immediately I saw a few ants scurrying around the sweet crumbs, trying to pull them somewhere. After a while reinforcements of ants came, and we found a way to pass the time. We purposefully dropped some more candy crumbs, and the whole army of ants came to retrieve and pull them to their nest, which was several feet away from the bench near a patch of grass. It took them more than one hour of collective and organized effort to transport all that treasure to their nest. We followed them, wondering how they were able to communicate with each other to pull it in the right direction. My father took the opportunity to give me a lesson in biology, explaining about these small and skillful creatures.

We arrived late at night at the hamlet of Snyezhnoye. I was so exhausted from the long trip that I fell asleep right away and didn't wake up until late in the morning. My mother and my Aunt Nyusya went to work, and in the house was only a woman with my little cousin Talik. There was nothing unusual about that, except that when I asked her where my father was, she told me that very early in the morning he had gone back to the place where he worked. I began to scream, cry, and have tantrums. The woman did not know what to do with me and just allowed me to cry out my frustration. Finally, I went outside and found some of my friends to play with.

When my mother returned from work, I had calmed down, and we had a supper together. But when she asked me about my

trip back home with my father, I snapped again and began to cry, asking her why my father had to go away again. Suddenly, my mother looked at me and screamed, "Stop doing that! Do you hear me? Stop doing that!" Her tone of voice was so unusual that I stopped crying at once, but she continued to repeat, "Stop doing that!"

I looked at her, puzzled, "I stopped crying, Mama...what else do you want me to stop doing?"

"Stop grimacing! I am telling you, stop it!"

"I am not doing anything, Mama," I answered.

"What do you mean, you are not doing it? Why are you having that wry smile?"

"I don't know, Mama, ...I am not smiling, Mama..."

My mother's anxiety was contagious, and I became scared not knowing what was going on. She called her sister, and the two of them started to examine my face. Aunt Nyusya told my mother to call right away our next-door neighbor, a very fat woman doctor who worked with her in the hospital. When she examined me, her diagnosis was: "One-sided facial paralysis¹⁰ that needs immediate intervention with physical therapy to prevent the affected nerves from dying."

"Why?" asked my mother. "What caused it? She was all right last night when she arrived from Crimea. What could have happened to her today? Is it contagious for Talik?"

The doctor reassured her that it was not contagious. Then she suggested that it could have been caused by a draft from the train window.

"Did you look out of the train window?" asked my mother.

"Yes, I did. All the way from Crimea to the station where we changed trains," I answered.

"Well, then it was a cold draft that caused it," concluded the doctor and added with strong conviction, "Tomorrow morning you should bring her to the hospital, and we shall start right away with physical therapy."

I couldn't figure out what I had done wrong and what all this fuss was about.

Our neighbor doctor arranged for me to be admitted to the hospital's children's ward, and for several weeks I underwent intensive physical therapy, massages, electrical stimulation, heat applications, and lots of rest in bed, which I hated. The warm

weather had arrived, and I wanted to play outside. My mother promised me that as soon as the summer vacation started, I would go home. Meanwhile she and my Aunt Nyusya visited me every day and brought me sweets and books.

The intensive physical therapy somewhat improved the severity of the paralyzed nerves, and the left side of my face became a little bit relaxed. The doctor suggested then that I could be treated daily as an outpatient. Finally, my mother told me she would take me home.

During the summer my mother and I walked every day to the hospital, where I continued to receive physical therapy, massages, electrical stimulation, and heat applications. Although it took a long time to walk to and from the hospital and several hours of waiting and treatment, I was happy to be with my mother and looked forward to playing outside with my friends in the late afternoon and in the evening.

Until I started to have contact with the children, I really didn't understand what had happened to me, because, from the time the paralysis struck me, I was in contact only with the adults who took care of me. Although I was puzzled by what I perceived as their concern about my face, they did not laugh at me and did not make jokes about my distorted facial features. During all that time I didn't see my face in a mirror because there were no mirrors around me.

When I started to go outside to play with the children, I finally understood that something strange had happened to me. At first, the children found it very amusing, thinking that I was trying to make them laugh by grimacing, and they were curious how I was able to do it; some attempted to imitate me. But it did not last for long. As soon as they found out that I could not change the expression on my face, they found it to be weird and started to tease me and call me all kinds of ugly names. Only a few children, whom I later considered as my true friends, were able to accept it as an illness which afflicted me and for which I was receiving treatment in the hospital. I began to avoid those children who were unkind to me and to seek the company of those who did not bother me with teasing and name-calling.

1. See the chapters “The Disposessed” and “Meeting on the Farmstead.”
2. See the copy of the photograph.
3. Gorpromuch—acronym for *Gorno-Promyshlennoye Uchilishche*—Industrial Mining School.
4. Porridge.
5. Pudding made with fruit or fruit juice and potato starch.
6. Communist youth organization for school-age children.
7. Blindman’s Bluff.
8. Who Has It?
9. The Bridge.
10. Bell’s Palsy.



My Father Returns to Live with Us

By Olga Gladky Verro and Antonina G. Gladky

My mother was becoming frustrated having to deal with my illness by herself. One evening she went to visit our neighbor, a woman doctor, who was treating me at the hospital, and told her, "It would be much easier for me if my husband was with us, if I could only find a teaching position for him here."

The doctor's husband, who was also a teacher in Snyezhnoye, heard her complaints and said, "At the Rabfak where I teach, they are desperately searching for a teacher of chemistry and biology for the next school year. They are trying to fill this position before the school's summer vacation begins. If your husband is qualified to teach those subjects, I suggest that he apply immediately while there are a few more days left in this school year."

My mother felt that this employment opportunity was simply falling into my father's lap and absolutely should not be lost. Since there was no direct and convenient transportation to the farmstead Proletarskaya Volya, where my father lived, my mother hired a man who had a horse and a wagon to drive her there and back. When she told my father that there was a chance to find employment at the Rabfak, he agreed that this was a unique opportunity for him and asked to be dismissed from his school right away. On the next day they arrived in Snyezhnoye. I was so happy to see my father back with us. But the fear of losing him again remained, and I stayed close to him for several weeks when he was at home.

The administration at the Rabfak was so anxious to fill the vacant position that they didn't even ask my father for any documentation of his qualifications—they held only a brief interview with him about his education. And they didn't request the usual references of his political or military status. For them the most important references were that my Aunt Nyusya was

recommended by the Commissar Ryapo, that she had already been employed for two years as a doctor in the local hospital, and that my mother had already been working for a year in the *Gorpromuch*. Having the family living there meant that my father would be a more permanent employee than someone whose family was somewhere else. Therefore, he was hired as a teacher of chemistry and biology at the Rabfak for the 1930–1931 school year.

The doctors who were treating me realized soon that the paralysis had reached the stage when the improvement was progressing slowly and that there was no need for intensive treatment at the hospital. They suggested we find an apparatus for electrical stimulation and continue the treatment at home.

In our hamlet and in the neighboring small towns, this apparatus was impossible to find. My father remembered that he had seen it at his home in Nikitovka; his mother had required it after she had a paralysis of her hands. It was a pre-revolutionary model that worked on batteries, but our neighbor doctor told him that it should do the work as well as the one in the hospital.

My father went to Nikitovka for one day and indeed found it there intact since it had not been bartered along with the other things that were in demand during the time of famine. At that time he also shipped by rail his father's desk and a book cabinet with glass doors, increasing our furniture possessions.

It was the autumn of 1930. I was seven-and-a-half, and my parents decided to enroll me in the first grade of the elementary school. During the first days in school, the pupils were taught the alphabet and calligraphy. We had to fill in the whole pages with single letters: "A," "B," and "C." Since I knew already how to write, I endured this nonsense for the "A." But when the teacher started the class with the "B," I filled the page with the words "mama," "papa," "cat," "dog," "house," and many more that I knew at that time. Then I made a few additions and subtractions, and at the end designed a house and trees and wrote their names underneath.

When the teacher collected the papers, to my surprise, she did not like what I had done. She asked, "Why didn't you do the assignment?"

Since I was used to receiving compliments from my parents for doing my best, I answered her very frankly, "Because I know

how to write all the letters, and I was bored sitting there and filling in the whole page with the same letter."

"Well," replied the teacher sternly, "you'd better come tomorrow morning with your mother to talk with me."

The next day I was placed in the second grade, as it was suggested by the teacher and by the school director. My mother agreed without any objections. I found myself completely comfortable studying in the second grade. At least there was a challenge to learn something new, and my grades were always "Good" or "Very good."

But it was a different story dealing with the cruelty of the children, and I had to adjust myself to their teasing and name-calling. There was no way I could hide the distortion on the left side of my face, and it quickly became an easy target for their jokes. I complained about this to my mother and father, and both of them tried to console me. The most convincing assurance they gave me was that the electrical stimulation my father was doing for me every evening would slowly relax the nerves, and that my face would then return to normal.

My mother's complaint to the teacher and to the director of the school didn't work well, because I was told to report to them when somebody bothered me with the name-calling, and they promised to punish them. Well, a few times I told the teacher, and she admonished my classmates, but they changed their tactics and, instead of teasing me in class or in school, they switched to the name-calling outside, when I was going to school or returning home.

My father's approach to help me cope with the teasing children was different and more effective, because under his guidance I began to learn how to deal with those who were unkind to me. Slowly he helped me to develop a strategy that relied completely on my own responses to the provocation and did not involve anybody else.

He taught me several basic rules: "Don't pay any attention to anyone who teases you. Don't show them that it bothers you, because that's exactly what they want, to see you upset. Try to completely ignore those who offend you by name-calling, and walk by them looking straight ahead like they do not exist. Avoid the company of children who laugh at you, and play or talk only with those who are kind to you. And don't complain to the

teacher—she doesn't have control outside the classroom." It was not easy for me to learn this behavior, but I believed my father and tried hard to follow his instructions. In the long run I was able to control my responses to teasing and name-calling by the malicious children.

Now that I was going to school, I had less time to play outside. Also I began selecting with whom I would play. One of the children I played with often was a deaf-mute boy whose mother was glad to invite me anytime I came to their apartment. Then there were several of my old friends who came to play with me in our kitchen and entrance hall. We often played "house" with our dolls, and each would bring some of our own toys. One day after they were gone, I discovered that my small toy iron that I used to iron my doll's clothes and fabrics had disappeared. I was very upset and complained to my parents. My father suggested that I go to each of the girls who had played with me that day and ask them if they had taken it inadvertently. But none of them would admit that she had taken it. So, for a while I didn't allow them to come and play with me in our apartment. But I really missed my iron when I was sewing or washing my doll's clothes.

One day when I was playing with the deaf-mute boy at his place, I saw on the bottom of his toy-box a toy iron almost like mine. I reasoned, "He is a boy, and he never plays with this iron that is lying idle with other forgotten toys. But I need it when I sew." The temptation to take it home with me was strong, but I knew that my father would not approve. Well, I devised a scheme to bring it home and hide it somewhere and then make believe that I'd found *my* iron.

The next time I went to play with the boy, I brought some of my toys with me, and, when I was returning home, I also took his toy iron with me. At home I hid it under a wardrobe in my aunt's room. When my parents came home, I made a big fuss again looking for my iron everywhere, under the beds, in the kitchen, and in my aunt's room. Then suddenly I screamed with joy, "I found it! I found it! Here, under the wardrobe!"

My father said, "You see, and we thought that your friends have stolen it. Let me see it." When he took the iron in his hands, he wondered, "Strange, it was hidden a long time under the wardrobe, and there is not a speck of dust on it." He began to examine it carefully and saw the trademark on the iron stamped

in a foreign language.

It did not take him long to figure out that it was not my iron, which had been manufactured in our country. I saw my father's face become very stern when he, looking straight in my eyes, asked me, "Where did you get this iron? Tell me the truth!"

I knew that my father never punished me if I told him the truth, even if what I had done was wrong. He would usually give me a long lecture on why I shouldn't do it again. I realized that my trick had not worked, and I told him that I took it from a deaf-mute boy and justified myself, "He is a boy, and he never plays with it. But I need it to iron my Pupsyk's clothes!"

As I expected, my father told me that what I had done was stealing, which could not be justified with any excuses. "Do you remember how you felt when your iron was stolen?" he asked me. "That's how this boy will feel when he discovers that his iron has disappeared."

He ordered me to take the toy iron right away back to the boy's home. He wanted me to apologize to the boy's mother, but I absolutely refused to do that. Then he agreed that I could save my humiliation by saying that I took it home with my toys after I played with the boy because I thought that this one was mine: I had a similar toy iron, and it had disappeared. However, I had to promise my father that I would never do it again. When I came home, my father promised me that as soon as he went somewhere in the big city, he would try to find and buy another toy iron for me. This was my first and last lesson about stealing. My father accomplished teaching me about it without punishment.



Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria Outbreak

By Olga Gladky Verro and Antonina G. Gladky

In the beginning of the winter of 1930–1931 there was a sudden outbreak of scarlet fever and diphtheria in the hamlet of Snyezhnoye. As a doctor in the local hospital, my Aunt Nyusya¹ knew that the isolation ward was quickly filling with children and adults. She told my mother to check with my teacher and if there were any sick children in my class, to keep me out of school until the epidemic subsided. But her warning came too late for me.

I still remember the day my mother came home from a cooperative store with a tall, narrow terra cotta jar glazed in a rust-brown color. I got interested in what was inside such an unusual and pretty container. My mother told me that it was full of marinated brown *Russula* mushrooms, which I liked very much, and that we would have them for supper when Papa returned from work. I began to beg my mother to give me one to taste before supper and was so delighted to see her opening the jar. She took a fork, removed one mushroom, and kept it up to let some marinade drip into the jar. In an anticipation of such a delicacy, my mouth filled up with saliva, which I swallowed, and screamed, “A-a-a!” from a strong pain in my throat.

“What is the matter? Are you hurting somewhere?” asked my mother anxiously.

“Yes,” I answered, “my throat hurts when I swallow.” I saw my mother drop quickly into the jar the mushroom, which she was ready to give me.

Raising her voice, she asked me, “You have a sore throat?!” And without waiting for my answer, she commanded, “Open your mouth! Put your tongue out! Say ‘A-a-a.’”

She carefully inspected my throat, and her diagnosis was, “Yes, you have a very red throat.” Then she placed her hand on my forehead and announced with concern on her face, “You have

a fever. You are coming down with something. Go to bed right away, and I will take your temperature."

"Give me the mushroom first," I demanded.

"No. Not with that inflammation in your throat! You cannot have marinated mushrooms," she answered sternly.

But I started to jump on my bed and to scream, "I want a mushroom! Give me a mushroom!"

Hearing a commotion in our room, my Aunt Nyusya came in holding Talik in her arms and asked what was going on. My mother warned her, "Get the boy quickly out of this room. Lyalya has a red throat, and I think also a fever. It could be contagious."

"I told you," replied my aunt, "that there are already several cases of diphtheria and scarlet fever among the children in the workers' part of the hamlet and in the school, and one of the teachers is in the hospital with a severe case of scarlet fever. Diphtheria is especially vicious among babies, toddlers, and younger children. We'd better call the doctor immediately to see what's wrong with Lyalya."

Our next-door neighbor, a woman doctor, came right away and examined my chest, face, hands, and arms, which were already beginning to be covered with red spots. "It is indeed scarlet fever," she concluded. "You have to take her immediately to the hospital to the contagious diseases unit," she ordered. "And boil all the dishes and clothes that she came in contact with in the last few days."

My mother went across the street to ask the man who had a horse and sled to get ready to take me to the hospital. She dressed me up like I was going to the North Pole, and as soon as my father arrived from work, he called the man to say we were ready. All three of us sat on the sled and arrived at the hospital after dark.

The doctor who examined me confirmed the diagnosis and ordered I immediately be placed in the isolation room of the contagious diseases ward. I started to scream and didn't want my mother to leave me. The doctor felt that if my mother had scarlet fever as a child, it would be better for her to stay with me in the hospital room. "But you should know," he warned her, "you have to stay here without going home for forty days until she is not contagious anymore."

"But how should I arrange it with the administration of *Gorpromuch*?" wondered my mother.

"Don't worry; I will issue a statement that you have to stay in quarantine because you may contaminate your students." My mother agreed, and she was allowed to sleep on a cot in my room.

I had a very light case of the disease and didn't have the patience to stay put in my bed. I was constantly getting up and walking in the hall of the ward. The doctor instructed my mother to try to keep me in bed because of various complications that could follow scarlet fever. My mother tried to keep me occupied all the time by making me work on lessons that I was missing in school, by reading to me, by telling me fables and stories, by suggesting that I draw pictures of the hospital for my father and write letters to take home when I was discharged. Meanwhile, the nurses decorated the ward halls with my pictures. Later, I found out that I was not allowed to take anything home from the hospital and was very disappointed that I couldn't show my work to my father.

But all this passive activity did not satisfy my need to be active. I hated staying in bed and was driving my mother out of her mind by doing somersaults on my bed and by running around the ward, visiting other patients. I still remember one very fat woman, a teacher from my school, who at her age got scarlet fever, too, but in an extremely severe form with very high fever. When she started to get better, my mother and I visited her every day. I was impressed that, while my skin was peeling in very fine scales, she was removing the heavy rough skin from her puffy hands like pieces of a torn glove. Toward the end of my illness, the doctor told my mother that as a result of my being so active during the illness and as an aftereffect of the scarlet fever infection, I had myocardial complications. And indeed, from that time on I was always out of breath when I was going uphill or up the stairs.

While I was in the hospital, my Aunt Nyusya received notice that she had to travel to Kharkov for her graduate study exams and for *aspirantura*, and she needed my mother to be home to watch her son Talik. She asked a favor from her colleague doctor in the contagious diseases ward to dismiss me from the hospital one week earlier than the forty days established by the regulations for quarantine. He agreed under the conditions that I would be confined to my room and that I wouldn't come in contact with anybody for one more week.

Again, my father hired the man with the sled from our hamlet—the one who had brought us to the hospital—to take us back home. Because it was very cold and windy, my mother dressed me in warm clothing my father brought from home, and then they bundled me like a mummy with several blankets. They even covered my face, leaving only a slit for my eyes. At home I was not allowed to leave our room, or to play, or to touch my cousin Talik. My mother was considered to be germ-free because all her clothes had been disinfected at the hospital.



The Raging Snowstorm

By Olga Gladky Verro and Antonina G. Gladky

The winter of 1930–1931 was very cold and snowy. It was the middle of January when I returned home from the hospital.¹ The next day my aunt was ready to depart for Kharkov for her scheduled graduate exams. Early in the morning the snow was falling heavily, promising high accumulations in our region. My mother suggested to her sister that maybe it would be better for her to postpone the trip, since during such weather there might be long delays with the departures of trains until the railroad tracks were cleared. But Aunt Nyusya would not even hear about it; there were some important matters requiring her presence there at that time and, by not being there, she would jeopardize her opportunity to obtain the *aspirantura* assignment.

That morning Talik was cranky and asking his mother to hold him. Because she was busy getting ready to go, my mother took him in her arms and was consoling him, assuming that he was upset because his mother was going away. My aunt also attributed it to his anxiety about her departure. She gave him a quick goodbye kiss and hurried out the door.

When she was leaving, Talik was crying very hard and was reaching out toward her with his little arms. My mother couldn't calm him down for a long time after her sister was gone. Finally, he got exhausted from sobbing and fell asleep in my mother's arms. She slowly put him down in his little bed. Because of all this commotion, no one really noticed that Talik was not feeling well.

Indeed, he didn't sleep long and woke up crying. My mother said she felt something was wrong by the way he cried, like he had some kind of physical pain. She was asking him to show her where it was hurting, but he couldn't tell her anything. She touched his forehead and felt that Talik had a temperature.

Because the snowfall was increasing in intensity, the woman who watched Talik during the day decided to leave earlier for work on the second shift. My mother asked her on her way out to

call our neighbor doctor, who had just returned home from the hospital earlier than usual because of the bad weather. The doctor examined Talik very carefully and said that he probably was coming down with scarlet fever, which he might have caught from me. She said to give him a half-tablet of aspirin and to keep him warm. She promised to check on him tomorrow and, if needed, she would recommend taking him to the hospital.

In the late afternoon the heavy snowfall changed to a raging snowstorm with powerful winds. The snowdrifts were accumulating quickly around one-story houses. Soon, all the windows were covered with snow, and we couldn't see what was going on outside. And when the evening came, Talik continued to cry in my mother's arms, and she didn't know what to do with him. I was so impressed with the events of that day that I didn't want to go to bed. My father was anticipating how hard it would be to shovel the snow in the morning and was nervously smoking his pipe on the porch since my mother never allowed him to smoke in the house.

My mother was worrying about Talik's condition and was constantly monitoring his temperature, which became extremely high. She asked my father to call our neighbor doctor again. But as my father opened the entrance door of the porch to get out, he found a solid white snow wall. He began to pound the snow with a shovel to one side, away from the house wall. Then he pounded it up toward the roof, and at last he pounded the remaining snow down the steps and to the ground. Working in small increments of about a half-meter at the time, he slowly made a tunnel along the side of the house.

I put on my winter coat and wool kerchief and watched with curiosity from the porch door my father's progress. And my mother was worrying that I was not yet ready to breathe the cold air. When my father made a long passage and reached the front of the house, he finally was able to make an opening in the snow wall. He couldn't believe his eyes. He raised me up and allowed me to glance outside. The whole hamlet had disappeared. It looked like a strange Nordic landscape. The snowdrifts accumulated around the houses, covering them completely, including the roofs, forming many closely placed white hills barely detectable in the blizzard.

To reach our neighbor's house, my father had to dig a trench

through the snow that in some places was as high as his armpits. It took him a long time to do that and to make a tunnel to their door. Finally, at about midnight, the doctor could get out of her house, accompanied by my exhausted father.

She took Talik's temperature and ordered that my mother continue to give him the aspirin and put cold compresses on his forehead. Then she examined his throat and shook her head, making her final diagnosis that he had a very severe case of diphtheria and needed to be transported to the hospital in the morning. She said not to worry about the transportation to the hospital, because the mine administration would send drivers with sleighs to the hamlet to pick up the doctors and mine employees, and they would take Talik with them.

My mother and father stayed awake all night. She was taking care of Talik, changing cold compresses, holding him in her arms, and comforting him as he cried from pain. My father was busy reinforcing the walls of the snow tunnel to be ready in the morning to take Talik to the hospital.

Toward the morning, before daylight, Talik started to have difficulty in breathing, and my mother again sent my father to call our neighbor doctor. To get there he had to again shovel the previously made trench. When the doctor came, she said that the diphtheria infection had reached the dangerous stage very quickly and unexpectedly and that Talik would die unless we took him to the hospital immediately or get him oxygen from the pharmacy down the hill in the village of Snyezhnoye.

My father went out again with the shovel to make a trench to the house of the only man in the hamlet who had a horse. He could not make a straight-line trench because the snow was too high in some places, and he was going around the drifts finding the shallower spots. When he reached the house, the man was outside digging a trench to the horse's barn.

My father greeted the man with respect and told him that a child was dying and that he was the only one who could help to save him—if he could only drive them either to the hospital or to the pharmacy in the village. Hearing my father's request, the man looked at him in disbelief and asked, "How could you dare ask me to drive in this kind of weather? Do you want me to kill my horse? She will sink in this high snow before we get out of the hamlet. It's impossible to get anywhere through this snow with

the horse!"

Discouraged, my father returned home empty-handed. My mother asked the doctor to watch Talik; she put on her warm coat and woolen shawl and ventured outside. She followed the footsteps in the trench made by my father to the house of the man who had a horse. She implored him to help her. But the man was firm in his decision, "I cannot kill my horse! She will sink in this high snow and freeze to death! She could never reach the hospital or the pharmacy!"

"The child is dying!" supplicated my mother. "Please, have mercy—save the little boy!"

"Woo-o-man, do you understand that the snow is too high! The horse will get stuck in the first high snowdrift on the road, and no one would be able to get her out. She will freeze to death, and all of us will freeze, too!"

But my mother was not yielding, "If the child dies," she reproached the man, "it will be on your conscience!" She made a few steps toward her home and then returned back and appealed in desperation once more to the heartless man. "Please, please reconsider your decision. I am leaving with a hope that you will change your mind." But he didn't...

When she returned home, the doctor said that there was nothing she could do to prevent Talik from suffocating because his throat was completely obstructed by swelling. He was not crying anymore, and they could hardly hear his breathing.

My mother cradled her nephew in her arms and rocked him as if expecting that this might help him. But it was too late to save him. The doctor was watching the dying child helplessly, unable to help him. She took his hand, trying to detect his pulse, and shaking her head. Then, to be sure, she put a stethoscope to his chest and said, "Poor Talik, it is over... Why did this little child have to suffer so much?" And then she added, almost excusing herself for not being able to detect the problem sooner, "Who could have predicted that this infection would proceed with lightning speed? It was a very rare fulminate form of diphtheria!" And she told my crying mother to put Talik in his little bed.

My father entered from outside, where he was still shoveling the snow and announced, "It is already daybreak. Maybe we can bring the boy to the hospital now."

The doctor, who was ready to leave, replied, "It is too late,

Talik died a few minutes ago.”

My mother came out of her sister’s room, all in tears and repeating, “Poor little Talik... Poor little Talik...”

Before leaving, the doctor told my mother that she would make an official report and sign a certificate of Talik’s death. She also said she would make all the arrangements to have a small coffin sent to our home as soon as possible. She gave my mother very strict instructions not to allow anybody to enter the house, until it could be disinfected, and not to allow me to come near Talik’s body, or touch anything in my aunt’s room. Then she told her that as soon as the coffin was delivered, she should immediately put Talik in the coffin and arrange for a burial, because of the strict regulations prohibiting keeping someone who had died from the infectious disease in the home.

My mother was in a panic. “How can we bury Talik without his mother?”

My father made a decision, “We have to notify Nyusya immediately to return home!”

Indeed, as the doctor said, early in the morning, the mine administration sent men with big workhorses and sleighs to pick up the doctors and other employees to take them to the hospital and to other offices. When the men arrived in the hamlet, my father asked them to drop him at the post office so he could send a telegram to Nyusya in Kharkov. Knowing how important the *aspirantura* was for her sister, my mother decided to send her a straightforward message: “Talik died from fulminate diphtheria morning after your departure. Confirm immediate return home. Tonya.”

The woman who took care of Talik returned from work and found my mother in tears. She couldn’t believe that Talik had died so quickly, and now the two of them were crying. Together they washed Talik and dressed him in his best outfit. Before the little coffin arrived, they removed everything from the small storeroom² and put two chairs there on which the men put a little coffin.

All this time I was not allowed to come out of our room, and I watched what was going on from the semi-open door. I saw how they were draping the coffin with the lace curtains that they had removed from the windows in my aunt’s room. Then the woman put Talik’s little pillow there, and my mother gently placed Talik

in the coffin and covered him with more lace curtains.

This was the first time that I had seen what happens when somebody dies, and I was curious and at the same time afraid, because of many scary things I'd heard from my playmates about the dead. Before closing the door of the storeroom, my mother called me to come closer to see Talik for the last time, and to say goodbye, and to blow a kiss to my little cousin. My fear disappeared when I saw Talik lying peacefully in the coffin all adorned with the lace. He looked to me like he was sound asleep.

Our neighbor doctor pleaded on behalf of her colleague with the hospital administration and received their permission to put Talik's coffin in the hospital morgue for at least forty-eight hours to give time for his mother, Doctor Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya, to arrive. Late in the afternoon, the sled from the hospital arrived, and I heard as the man who came to take the coffin was nailing the lid shut. Then I saw how he, with the help of my father, was bringing it outside. I didn't understand at that time that Talik was gone forever.

My father went to the post office one more time and mailed a second telegram to Nyusya. The next day passed, and there was no answer from her. Meanwhile it became known that the blizzard had formed enormous snowdrifts and accumulated so much snow on the railroad tracks that for two days railroads in the whole region were at a standstill. The passengers were stranded in cold railroad stations' waiting rooms and halls, impatiently waiting for the main tracks to be cleared. Therefore, my mother and father assumed that either Nyusya was also sitting in some station unable to reach her destination in Kharkov or that the telegraph lines had been damaged by the snowstorm and the messages could not get through.

Forty-eight hours of keeping Talik's coffin in the hospital morgue went by, but there was no answer from Nyusya confirming her arrival. My mother received from the hospital a notice that they had kept Talik from burial for the maximum amount of time allowed by the regulations for contagious diseases and that they had to bury him immediately at the hospital cemetery.

My mother sent my father again to mail a third telegram. The next morning we received a telegram from Nyusya: "Departing immediately. Wait. Do not bury. Nyusya." She arrived late at

night on the same day. She was devastated when my mother told her that Talik had already been buried. She burst out in tears and sobbed, "I want to see my son for the last time. I want to see him... I need to see him..."

We called our neighbor doctor, who gave her a tranquilizer and reassured her that tomorrow morning she might petition a sanitary inspector to open the grave. That is exactly what Nyusya did. She probably would have not received this authorization had she not made it clear to the inspector that Talik was a son of Commissar Yan Ryapo, a well-known figure in the Ukraine, and that she wanted to make a photograph of the child in the coffin to send him.

With an official authorization in her hand, she rushed to the village to call on a photographer, who came with her to the cemetery and made a picture of Talik and Nyusya. I remember well this large photo of my Aunt Nyusya sitting or kneeling near the open coffin placed on the snow near the open grave and looking at Talik's face, which was still well preserved by the cold.

The sudden death of her son Talik was a deep tragedy for my Aunt Nyusya. She resigned from her position as an eye doctor in the hospital in Snyezhnoye and moved back to Kharkov. There she had a nervous breakdown, and her doctor suggested she not pursue the *aspirantura* and graduate studies, which would have produced more tension on her nerves. Instead, he suggested that she needed to distract herself, completely change her way of life, maybe travel, or to find some challenging activity that she could enjoy. I assume that Yan Ryapo, who was a Commissar of People's Commissariat of Education of Kharkovsky Province, helped her find a position as an eye doctor with the teams of medical expeditions in the remote areas of the Soviet Union that were organized by the People's Commissariat of Health in Moscow and had a division in Kharkov. Very soon she began a very interesting and challenging career.

She established her home base in Kharkov in a very good part of the city. She had one room in a two-room apartment with another couple, and they shared an entrance hall, kitchen, and bathroom. The expeditions were usually from several months to more than one year long, with periods of several months in between for rest and preparation for the next expedition. She was involved in these medical expeditions for many years and

traveled mostly in the remote areas of the Soviet Union, where there were no hospitals, and they had a field hospital in a big tent. I remember that she recounted about working on the medical program that was attempting to eradicate the epidemics of trachoma and blindness resulting from this disease common among the peoples of the remote regions in the Asiatic part of the country, where there were still many nomadic tribes—the Soviet Republics of Turkmen, Kazakh, Uzbek, Tadzhik, and Kirghiz. And I remember receiving a package from her with pine nuts from somewhere in the Baykal³ region.

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1. See the chapters “Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya” and “Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria Outbreak.”
 2. It was the unfinished bathroom in the apartment.
 3. Baikal Lake is located in the southeastern part of the Soviet Union, bordering Mongolia.



Sharing the Apartment

By Olga Gladky Verro and Antonina G. Gladky

After my Aunt Nyusya moved back to Kharkov¹, her room was immediately assigned to a Jewish couple. I don't remember their name or what the husband's occupation was, but he was employed somewhere in the mine's office. He was much older than his wife, but he allowed her to make all the decisions about their apartment and household matters. His wife didn't work and stayed at home.

She was a woman of below-average height and somewhat plump on the soft parts of her body. Her voluminous hairdo of bleached blond hair was showing a reddish origin at the roots. She had a light complexion and used, unusual for those times, heavy makeup to hide the rusty freckles on her nose and cheeks. Because of the obviously bleached color of her hair, right from the first day, my father jokingly named her Blondie; and from then on, when we talked about her among the three of us, we called her by this name.

Before moving in the apartment, Blondie had requested that the woman² who lived in our kitchen be removed from there and sent to live in the workers' barracks, as she stated, "Where she belongs." Then Blondie settled firmly in the kitchen, as if it were her second room. Only late in the afternoon, when my mother was returning from the *Gorpromuch*, Blondie retired to her room, leaving the kitchen for my mother to cook and for us to have supper at the kitchen table.

The winter and spring months passed without any incidents, and it seemed that sharing the apartment with the Jewish couple was not as difficult as we had expected after Blondie chased away the poor woman who lived in our kitchen. However, when the elementary school closed for the summer vacations and I remained at home, while my parents were still teaching in the *Gorpromuch* and the Rabfak, where there were special summer sessions, the situation suddenly changed.

From the time we lived in that apartment, I always played with my friends in the hall and in the kitchen. Therefore, when the school summer vacation started, the first day I stayed at home, I marched into the kitchen and accommodated myself at the kitchen table to sew for my Pupsyk doll. Blondie looked at me with surprise and told me, "Go and sew in your room."

"I always sew in the kitchen, because I need to have a table," I answered.

"Then put your stuff in your room now and come back here to sew when your mother is cooking in the afternoon."

"But I want to sew now!" I explained.

"Now, go and play outside," she ordered me sternly.

"Why can't I stay here? It is our kitchen, too!" I protested.

"You are disturbing me here!" she replied, raising her voice.

"No! I'm not disturbing you. I am sitting quietly and sewing. You don't need the whole table for yourself." I was not giving up my right to be there.

Blondie lost her patience listening to my reasoning and, without saying one more word, she grabbed my doll and the pieces of fabric that I had on the table and threw them in the hall on the floor. I ran after her, screaming. As I collected my doll from the floor, Blondie quickly returned to the kitchen and locked the door.

I began to bang at the door, screaming, "Open this door! Open this door!" But after a while I had to give up.

That afternoon I complained to my mother about how I had been treated by Blondie. My mother diplomatically expressed her dissatisfaction with the way Blondie treated me. Blondie justified her behavior by accusing me of being impertinent and not obeying her orders. My mother didn't want my father to be involved in this matter and agreed to Blondie's demand, that I be banished from entering the kitchen during the day, under an excuse that I was disturbing her while she was cooking. When my mother told me that, I felt that she had wronged me, too.

Suddenly I was deprived of a part of my living space. Now I was confined to playing only in the hall. But not long after this incident in the kitchen, Blondie began to object to my bringing my friends to play with me in the hall, because we made too much noise and she had headaches from it. She would come out of the kitchen and snap at us and order my friends to leave. This time I

complained about it to my father, and he told me, "Don't pay any attention to that artificial blonde! You may play in the hall as you always did." But my mother, instead, said that she would talk to Blondie and reason with her.

Reasoning didn't help the situation at all, because Blondie insisted that she didn't want children in the apartment. My father was ready to start an argument with her, but my mother didn't want any more problems and was able to persuade him not to get into a fight; after all, Blondie's husband was a member of the Bolshevik Party and, who knows, he might have some connections who could cause other problems for us. Listening to what my parents were saying, I figured out that they were on my side but were afraid to defend me because of Blondie's husband. But I decided not to give up easily.

The next time Blondie told me to get out of the hall, I defied her. "My father told me that I can bring my friends to play here! You are not my mother to tell me what I can or cannot do!"

"You wry-mouthed girl!" she screamed at me in a shrill voice. All of you, get out of here!"

My friends retreated to the porch, and she chased them outside and locked the entrance door. I began to cry as loud as I could.

She grabbed me by my arm and pushed me into my room, repeating the offending name again, "You wry-mouthed girl! Get into your room and stay there!"

I opened the door and, remaining in our room, threatened her by screaming with all my might, "You just wait—I will tell my mother that you call me 'wry-mouthed!' I will tell my father, too!"

That evening, after I told my parents what had happened, they confronted Blondie and had a big quarrel with her and her husband.

My mother told her, "Aren't you ashamed to hurt an afflicted child by offensive name-calling? Think how you would feel if your child had a physical defect and people called him insulting names." My mother's words didn't make any impression on Blondie.

Instead, she had the nerve to tell her, "If you don't like to live here, you should apply for a transfer to another apartment." The relationship between the families became very tense after this happened, and I had no other choice but to obey Blondie's

restrictions and to give up playing in the hall with my friends.

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1. See the chapters “Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria Outbreak” and “The Raging Snowstorm.”
 2. See the chapter “In the Hamlet of Snyezhnoye.”



Exploring New Places and Activities

By Olga Gladky Verro

That summer my friends and I were also one year older, and we began exploring new places in our hamlet that had been of no interest to us the previous year.¹ I remember that one day we went all the way to the coal mine to watch how a very long conveyor belt, like a monstrous shiny black snake, was coming out of the mine bringing out coal on top of a dull black hill formed by the discarded mining rock. On both sides of the conveyor, the whole length of it, were many women standing close to each other. Their hands and faces were blackened by the coal dust; the kerchiefs covering their heads were of an indefinite dark gray color—faded from sunlight, bad weather, and repeated washing. With the constant motion of both hands, the women selected the pieces of dull black rocks and threw them behind on the hill, thus cleaning the coal from impurities.

At the end of the conveyor belt, the remaining shiny anthracite fell into a small metal cart placed beneath it. When the cart was heaping-full, the two women pushed it away on the sidetrack and placed another empty cart under the conveyor belt. They pushed the full cart on the narrow rails to the edge of the rock mound, turned the cart over, and allowed the anthracite to pour down on a slide into the open railroad platform car standing below.

When we were returning home after our excursion to the mine, one of the older more experienced girls commented, “Now it is hot to stand there all day long, but it is worst in the winter, when it is snowing and cold wind is blowing!”

Another place that we visited often that summer was the miners’ club. For a couple of weeks there was going on a big event called *chystka*, or a purge of Bolshevik Party members. It was an unusual and a sorry spectacle that many people from our hamlet and vicinities came to watch. To be able to sit in the front row and

see what was going on, we had to come very early in the morning.

In the middle of a bare stage was a long table, and behind it sat several very important looking men and one woman—the inquisition tribunal of the Bolshevik Party. One of them would call a name and ask the party member to come to the stage; unceremoniously, the order was given to put his or her Bolshevik Party membership card on the table and then to stand on the left side of the stage—ahead of the table and sideways to the public and to the tribunal.

Each inquisitor would ask questions and order the victim to confess about such things as, “What was the social status of your parents before the revolution? And your spouse’s parents?”

Then another one would ask, “What were the previous places of your residence?”

And the woman was always asking, “What activities were you involved in the ranks of the Bolshevik Party?”

There were many other questions that we, children, could not understand. One thing was clear to us: those men or women were interrogated about something that either they, or their parents, had done wrong and that they had to confess to in front of all those people in the audience.

Some of them were soft-spoken, shy, and remorseful in admitting some shortcomings of what was expected of them as members of the Bolshevik Party. Some of them were admonished and asked to improve themselves, and their party membership cards were returned to them. The others boldly declared repentance for their political sins, or for the sins of their parents. Their party membership cards were withdrawn, and they were declared “expelled from the party.”

The most interesting to watch were those who couldn’t find words to answer; they would gesticulate profusely with their arms, hit their chests with their fists, or cry aloud and ask their stone-faced accusers for forgiveness for their political sins.

Then there were those who would come on the stage and throw their party membership card on the table. Some would say with defiance, “Here it is! You may have it!” and leave without submitting themselves to the interrogation; others would just turn around and leave without saying a word. It was a real-life drama, and the performers were real people in distress who, against their will, were forced to humiliate themselves in public. Walking

home from the miners' club, my friends and I exchanged our impressions and feelings by sympathizing with the victims, and we openly expressed our hatred of the inquisitors.



Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky), in the woods near the Hamlet of Snyezhnoye, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1931. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.

Another episode that left the most profound impression on me for many years to come also took place in the miners' club. One day my friends came calling on me, "We saw so many people

walking toward the club. Something interesting must be going on up there. Let's go and see!" When we arrived, there was a long, slowly moving line of people waiting to enter the club.

We waited in line with adults in front of and behind us. We didn't know what they were waiting to see. We heard them talking in subdued voices about some very well-known man at the mine, a Bolshevik, and some were guessing about who would take his place in the party.

When we entered the club, I saw that it was decorated with many red flags, and on one side there stood a small group of people, mostly men, who must have been very important, because we heard the adults near us whisper their names, "Look, so-and-so is here..."

"That one is also here..."

"That's his wife, and that one is his son..."

From our group of children I was the first standing behind the adults obstructing my view. Unexpectedly, in front of me, all draped in red satin, appeared a long coffin, the edges of which were at the level of my shoulders. As I was pushed forward by my friends, I suddenly saw the face of a dead man so close to my face that I could clearly see the small sweat drops on his forehead and cheeks and the short hair sticking up from the yellowish-gray skin above and below his purple lips.

This short but horrible vision of a corpse's face made me shiver all over and remained imprinted in my memory. I continued to see it in front of me long after I was outside of the club. From that day on, I began to be afraid to be alone in a dark room at night and in all poorly lighted places, where I feared that a corpse with that horrible face could be lurking in the darkness. I was not able to get rid of that corpse's vision for many years to come.

Now that I was not able to bring my friends into the house, I often stayed in our room and tried to find something to do. One rainy afternoon, I opened some desk drawers; my attention was attracted by my father's razor, which my father always warned me not to touch, because it was "very sharp," and that I "could cut myself." "Well," I thought, "I would like to try how sharp it is. I will be very careful in handling it." With great precaution, I took the razor out of its box, came close to the window, extended the blade, and admired its slick shiny surface.

Then I placed the razor on the windowsill and went around the room looking for something hard that I could try to cut. I thought, "A chair? A table? N-o-o, father would quickly detect the nicks on them." I returned to the window and put my hand on the painted windowsill that felt smooth under my fingers. "Yes! I can try it here somewhere close to the end of it, where it will be less visible." I placed a blade almost perpendicular to the surface and chipped a piece of dry paint, then another piece, and one more, until enough wood was exposed. Now I was able to try the razor by cutting thin shavings of wood, until the blade got stuck in the wood grain and I had to extricate it. The edge of the windowsill looked uneven, and I began to smooth it from the opposite direction until it looked good to me. I cleaned all the paint chips and wood shavings from the floor, placed the razor back in the box and in the desk's drawer.

In the evening I carefully watched my parents to see if they would come close to the windowsill, and I fell asleep sure that my "testing" remained undetected. Early in the morning, my father got ready to shave. He brushed a soap foam on his face and, with the first stroke of the razor screamed, "Tonya!" Then he asked with an angry voice, "Did you touch my razor?"

"No," replied my mother. "What is the matter?"

Meanwhile my father was carefully inspecting the blade against the light from the window. "I sharpened it only a few days ago and now it looks like a saw-blade!" protested my father. Then he had a hunch; he came close to my bed, where I was quietly dressing, and asked me with a stern expression on his face, which meant he expected me to tell the truth.

"What did you do with my razor, Lyalya?"

I knew that my father wouldn't punish me if I told him the truth, and I replied with innocence, "I only tried to see how sharp it was."

"What did you cut with it?"

"Only a little bit on the corner of the windowsill." I got to the window and showed him my masterpiece.

My father looked at me with desperation, "Didn't I tell you that you should not touch the razor?"

"Yes," I answered, "you told me that it was very sharp and that I could cut myself. But I was very, very careful in handling it, and, as you can see," and I showed him both sides of my hands, "I

didn't cut myself."

"Don't you know that the razor is used only for shaving? It is not for cutting wood, or meat, or anything else!" reproached me my father. "Now I have to go to work unshaven, because it would take me probably more than one hour to sharpen the blade. Remember from now on not to do anything with my razor again!"

"Yes, Papa..." I promised.

Another episode that I remember well—because my father reminded me about it very often—was about his watch. It was an old wristwatch that had been giving him problems for some time, and he often repaired it himself using the smaller blade of his pocketknife as a screwdriver. He allowed me to watch him and, in doing it, he used to explain to me what each part did. When I asked him when I could have my own watch, he told me, "When I buy a new watch for myself, I will give my old watch to you."

I didn't have to wait long, because that year he indeed bought a new watch and solemnly presented his old one to me. It was still working, and I proudly wore it, although it looked huge on my small wrist. One day it stopped again, and I decided to repair it myself without waiting for my father. "After all," I thought, "I saw my father doing it so many times, I know what I should do to repair it. And I know how to use his old pocketknife to remove the screws."

I accommodated myself standing on my knees on a chair near the window so I could see better and began to "repair my watch."

I carefully opened the back lid with the dull side of the blade and saw that the little wheels were not moving. To start them I tried to touch them with the point of the blade; then I gently shook the watch as I had seen my father do. It didn't help.

I proceeded to the next step used by my father and unscrewed several tiny screws holding one part and saw underneath some more wheels. I was not able to start moving them, either. I was carefully collecting all parts and screws on a piece of paper placed on the windowsill, as my father used to do. I continued to remove one screw after another and collect parts until the spring jumped out and rolled on the floor. I decided to put it back, but no matter how I tried, I was not able to push it back in place. "Well," I thought, "I'd better leave it all as it is for my father to put it back together."

When my father came home, I told him proudly, "Papa, my

watch stopped, and I tried to repair it myself. But there must be something broken in it, because it didn't start. I was waiting for you, Papa, to help me, because I was not able to put back the spring."

My father looked at the disassembled watch and its scattered parts and exclaimed in disbelief, "What have you done to my old watch?"

"It is not your watch anymore—it is my watch," I protested. "You gave it to me!" Then I justified my actions, "I saw you many times, how you repaired it. I thought that I could do it, too. I knew that you would be very proud if I repaired it all by myself!"

After such a convincing explanation, my father couldn't find words to argue, or to scold me. He just took a little box and collected what he could salvage from the parts and screws. When I was already in bed, I heard him talking to my mother in a subdued voice, "I have to find some construction kit for our daughter to keep her hands busy; otherwise, one day when we return home, we might find our bed taken apart."

Indeed, not too long after this happened, my father bought a present for me. It was a large "Constructor Kit" with all lengths and sizes of metal plates with perforated holes; then there were axles, wheels, brackets, screws, nuts, washers, screwdriver, and an instruction booklet showing how to make many kinds of projects, from simple carts to cranes. It was the smartest thing that he could do to keep me out of trouble. It kept me busy for hours, putting together not only items shown in the instructions, but I made numerous items of my own invention and proudly presented them in the evening to be admired by my father, who praised me for my good work.

Another activity that I continued to be busy with was to sew for my Pupsyk. My problem was the scarcity of fabric remnants. Occasionally I would go in the back of the hamlet houses to search in the garbage piles for discarded scraps of fabrics, bring them home, wash and iron them, and make a new outfit for my doll. I had a small plywood toy suitcase in which I carefully preserved all my creations.

When my Aunt Nyusya left, she gave me her box with thread floss and yarns, and I used them to embellish the doll's clothes with embroidery and crochet. Most ideas came from my mother's Women's Journal, and I adapted them to my miniature creations.

It was an outlet that compensated for my desire to have many pretty clothes, which I imagined I was able to have, as I admired them in the children's fashion section of the Women's Journal.

The reality was that fabrics were hard to find and, when the miners' cooperative store would receive a small supply, one had to buy what was available at that time. Therefore, both my mother and I had a limited wardrobe mostly of practical everyday and school clothes and one festive dress for which somehow my mother was able to find the fabric.

Having had only a few nice dresses as I was growing up, I remember most of them. I remember even the fine details of one beautiful dress that I had from the time I was about five-and-a-half years old. This dress was gathered around the oval yoke and fell loosely around my body. It was made from fine white batiste and had a row of white daisies embroidered with raised satin stitches all around the yoke. The cuffs of the short sleeves and the wide hem were adorned with the drawn-thread hem finish. My Aunt Tanya, who was a very refined embroiderer, did the embroidery. My mother, however, had to take the embroidered fabric to the dressmaker to sew the dress.

I remember that on those occasions when my mother allowed me to wear that dress, she also gave me a white slip finished with a narrow lace and made especially for that dress. She used to tie a wide white satin ribbon in my hair, and I also had white socks and wore sandals. When I was all dressed up I felt ecstatic and kept my head high; knowing that I looked pretty, I imagined that everybody was admiring me.

One day, my mother dressed me up in my white dress and took me to the photographer to take a picture. There was a fancy chair that I wanted to sit on. Well, the photographer had his own ideas about how he wanted me to pose for him—just sitting on a stool near the small table and holding my hand against my cheek. This put me in a sulky mood, and it was preserved forever in that photograph.²

Another nice dress that I remember was made from red marquisette with small white polka dots. There was enough of that fabric left over for me to make a matching dress for my Pupsyk. And when I wore that dress, I took my doll with me to show my creation.

When I was about eight years old and could read well, I

crocheted from pink silky rayon yarn a summer hat³ for me, following the instructions printed in the Women's Journal, and then made a miniature version for my doll.

In the wintertime I usually wore flannel dresses with sweaters over them and heavy cotton stockings held up by elastic garters around the legs. I don't remember much about the kind of shoes I had, but in the summer there were mostly sandals. In the winter, I wore either laced shoes with rubber galoshes over them in bad weather, or when the snow was frozen, I wore thick felt boots called *valenky*.

All my winter coats had quilted lining. They were all made from my father's old and faded wool suits that my grandfather Berezhnoy ripped apart, turning the wrong side of the fabric out, and tailoring straight coats for me. He did it during our summer vacations, when my mother and I were coming to Slavyansk Kurort.

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1. See the chapters "Sharing the Apartment" and "My Childhood in the Hamlet of Snyezhnoye."
 2. From the photograph of Olga Gladky in 1928.
 3. From the photograph of Olga Gladky in 1931 in the forest near the hamlet of Snyezhnoye.



Digging into My Father's Past

By Olga Gladky Verro

One day, at the end of summer 1931, I was surprised that Blondie, with whom we shared the apartment, completely changed her behavior toward me. She stopped calling me names and even invited me to come and sew in the kitchen, showing her interest in my work. When she found out that I collected discarded fabric scraps from the refuse piles, she went in her room and brought out a bundle of remnants and shared some of them with me. For me it was a treasure-trove; there were pieces of beautiful lace, decorative trimmings, and most of all a variety of fabrics, some of them very unusual silk, brocades, and pretty prints. I was ecstatic to see all those riches, and my mind started to work on various creations for my doll Pupsyk.

I was also very pleased that Blondie became very kind to me and talked about herself when she was young, about her grandparents, where they lived and how she loved them. And she made me talk about my grandparents, too. I told her that I never knew my grandmothers, because they died before I was born.

"Are your grandfathers alive?" she asked me almost casually and in a pleasant voice.

"Dyedushka Berezhnoy is alive. Dyedushka Gladky died not long ago."

"Oh, what a pity!" she expressed her sympathy. "Why did he die?"

"He had tuberculosis," I explained.

"Was he a good grandfather? Were you fond of him?"

"Oh, yes! He was very kind to me when we lived with him."

"Why did you live with him?"

"Because he was sick, and my father had to help Vera take care of him."

"Who is Vera?"

"My father's sister."

"A-a, she lived with your grandfather, too?"

"Yes."

"Did you move to Snyezhnoye after your grandfather died?"

"No-o-o, my Papa was afraid that I would catch tuberculosis and sent me and Mama here to stay with my Aunt Nyusya."

"That's why you came here?" she asked for my confirmation of her conclusion. "Tell me what town your grandfather Gladky lived in."

"It was not a town, but a big railroad station, Nikitovka," I corrected her.

"Do you know where your grandfather worked?" she continued to dig further in a casual manner.

"He worked on the railroad telegraph," I replied proudly.

"You are a smart girl," she commended me, "you know the answers to everything." Then, seeing that I was pleased with her compliments, she asked, "Do you know if your father lived in Nikitovka, too, when he was young?"

"Of course, he lived there with his father and mother!" I answered, thinking it was a very silly question.

After finding out about one of my grandfathers, Blondie did not lose time and started to ask questions about my maternal grandfather, where he lived, what his occupation was, and if my mother lived in Slavyansk when she was young.

That evening, with great enthusiasm, I showed my parents all the scraps Blondie gave me and told them about how she'd invited me into the kitchen, and how she was very kind to me, how she talked with me for a long time. My mother right away became suspicious of this sudden change in Blondie's attitude toward me and questioned me, "What did she talk with you about?"

"Well, nothing special," I replied candidly. "She told me about her grandparents and asked me if my grandparents were alive. Then she wanted to know where they lived and where they worked. Then she asked a very silly question; she asked if you lived with your parents when you were young!"

"Did you answer all her questions?"

"Oh, yes! Blondie told me that I was very smart girl and that I knew everything."

Later, when we all were in bed and my mother assumed that I

was asleep, I heard my parents exchange their opinions in a very low tone of voice. My mother asked my father, "Did you hear what Blondie wanted to find out from our daughter?"

"Yes, I heard it," he answered.

"Do you think she is plotting to drive us out of our room?"

"I think your suspicion is right," he replied.

After a moment of silence, my mother added, "It seems not to be a simple coincidence. Probably, she is expecting a baby and needs a room for a nanny."

"Ya-a," confirmed my father.

"What a cunning woman she is, using an innocent child to get the information."

"It sounds like she is preparing leads for her husband to dig into our past," my father remarked.

"Your past," clarified my mother.

"No, our past," he corrected her, "because she inquired about your father too." For a while they were silent, and then my father asked, "Do you think it's time for me to start looking for a position somewhere else?"

"It would not do any harm, just in case it will be needed," agreed my mother.

"I shall inquire right away at the Regional Commissariat of People's Education," my father replied.

I fell asleep trying to figure out the meaning of my parents' conversation. In the morning my mother warned me to be careful and not to talk too much with Blondie when she asked about our relatives. But Blondie didn't approach me anymore; probably she had found out all the information she needed and wasn't interested in friendly conversations with me after that.

As the school year began, I was coming home when my mother was also returning from Gorpromuch, and Blondie was disappearing into her room leaving the kitchen to my mother.

During that year of teaching at the Rabfak, my father had a very good reputation as a teacher of biology and chemistry. Not long after the school year began, the Rabfak director appointed him also as an assistant director for the curriculum when that position suddenly became vacant.

The person who held that position had been driven out by party organizer, called *partorg*, Comrade Perekotiyenko, who was also teaching communist Bolshevik Party history at the Rabfak.

He made an application for this position and had great hope he would be appointed in his place. He was convinced that, without any doubt, as a Bolshevik Party member, he would be appointed. There were rumors that he anticipated that he would finally be able to attach a title of "Assistant Director" to his name and move one step forward toward higher positions in the educational bureaucracy.

To his surprise, after he'd worked so hard to make that position available for himself, his application was rejected by the Rabfak director and by the Regional Commissariat of People's Education office. It was officially stated that he was lacking the minimal level of education required for curriculum planning, scheduling, and coordination of courses, teachers, and students. Unofficially, it became known that he also could not be appointed to this position because everybody knew about his insolent and uncompromising character; his constant fault finding in everyone and in everything would be disruptive to the normal functioning of teachers and students at the Rabfak.

Therefore, when my father was appointed to this position, he instantly was perceived by Comrade Perekotiyenko as his personal enemy and became a target for his fault finding and carping. I don't know exactly what kind of problems he made for my father—probably they were beyond my child's comprehension. But I remember very well how often my father complained to my mother about "that damned Bolshevik Perekotiyenko," who was constantly bothering him with all kinds of complaints, obstructing his decisions, and reporting on him to the Rabfak director. And when the director's response to his complaint did not satisfy his demands, he would go and grumble to the office of Regional Commissariat of People's Education.

After a few incidents, the Rabfak director told my father, "I am very happy with your professional performance, and I told the superiors at the Regional Commissariat about this several times." He reassured my father, "Don't you worry about Comrade Perekotiyenko's complaints, because I and the Regional Commissariat know he is an empty-headed troublemaker, and we are all used to dismissing his complaints as a mere nuisance. Please, don't you worry, Orest Mikhailovich," he told my father, "I don't intend to lose another assistant director on account of that blabbermouth."

Therefore, my father was annoyed by trivial complaints from comrade Perekotiyenko, but he didn't feel any real threat of losing his position on his account. However, both my father and mother had a strong intuition that Blondie's motives in trying to get the information from me about my grandparents and where they lived were suspicious. It sounded like she wanted to find out something about their past. And it was more likely that Blondie's husband could easily succeed in this task, because he was an educated man and, in addition, he had good connections in the Bolshevik Party's Jewish circles.



The Extraordinary Meeting

By Orest M. Gladky

Toward the end of the 1931–1932 school year at the Rabfak, I began to detect more and more warning signs, and they were becoming more obvious; I knew that the time of reckoning with my past was coming closer and closer. By this time, I had already learned to feel intuitively all those symptoms that usually preceded my exposure as the “enemy of the people.” On those occasions I would sharpen my perception of warning signals to various unspoken indications and would awaken my vigilance by listening carefully to every word of the students and faculty who were Bolshevik Party members. And I took seriously all hints from sympathetic persons.

One evening, after a faculty meeting, as I was on my way home, one of my colleagues casually passing me on the street told me, “You know, Orest Mikhailovich, just between us, you understand that this is for your ears only... But I felt that you should know this. I overheard that somebody is asking questions about your past. Be careful!”

“Really?” I replied without surprise in my voice and added, “I’m grateful for your warning.”

My colleague asked apologetically, “I hope that you don’t mind, if I don’t walk with you? People are suspicious. Good night!”

“Of course,” I replied, “I understand. Good night!”

At home I consulted with my wife about it, and we decided that I would resign at the end of the school year, which was only two weeks away.

A few days later, another teacher who was always friendly with me asked me secretly, “Have you heard the rumors that comrade *partorg* Perekotiyenko has an eye on your position of assistant principal?”

"No, I haven't," I said with sincere surprise in my voice, "But thank you for telling me about it. If the *partorg* is aiming at my position, he would surely find a way to remove me from it. I shall be ready." And I thought, *That's why my past is investigated.*

I talked about it with my wife late into the night, and it seemed to us that Perekotiyenko was too stupid to find anything compromising about me by himself. In the regional commissariat of education, they knew him too well to pay any attention to his stories or to help him with this task. But, if it was true, he would probably seek this position for the next school year. And it was still logical to resign after the school vacations started. It seemed to us that my resignation at that time would be less abrupt and less suspicious.

But the next day it became completely clear to me that it was comrade Perekotiyenko who was involved in digging into my past. One of my students, a Bolshevik Party member, a simpleton by nature, stayed after class and in an innocent and friendly way asked me, "Comrade teacher Gladky, do you know that we, you and I, come from the same district? You are from Nikitovka, and I am from Bachmut..."

"How did you find out about it?" I asked him in the same friendly tone.

"Well, I don't think there is anything wrong in telling you this. Of course, don't let anyone know that I told you," he said, scratching his head. "You see, last night our party activists were talking about some special meeting to be held. It should be some kind of a surprise meeting at the end of the school year. They asked me if I knew your family in Nikitovka, and that I should tell them what I know. I told them that I didn't know your family and had nothing to say. And that was that. Then, this morning I thought that it would be nice to let you know that we came from the same district," explained to me this politically unsophisticated young Communist.

"Yes, comrade, I am glad, too, to hear that you are from Bachmut. It is a nice town, isn't it?" I replied and added jokingly, "Of course, I will not tell anyone that you told me this, and you better not tell anyone, either..." The bell called for the beginning of the next class, and our conversation ended.

That evening I came home and told my wife straightforwardly our coined phrase for such situations, "It's time to go!"

"But, Orest," she tried to reason with me, "we agreed that less than two weeks are remaining to the end of the school year and that you should finish the year here..."

"But I have already inquired at the regional commissariat of people's education about any new openings for the next school year. I hope that, before the summer vacations begin, they will notify me."

Indeed, during the last days of examinations I was notified that, at the Rabfak in the neighboring hamlet of Kisyelyevka, there was an opening for exactly the same position as I had here—teacher of chemistry and biology and the assistant director of curriculum. I didn't lose any time and immediately went to Kisyelyevka for an interview with the Rabfak director. Since it was under the jurisdiction of the same regional commissariat of people's education, where they knew about my good performance, they gave me their recommendations and confirmation for my appointment right away.

I decided not to tell my Rabfak director until the last day of school that I would be leaving. Every day I worked diligently from the early hours of the morning late into the night on the end-of-the-year reports, finishing all of them right on time. On the last day of school, I came to my office very early and began to clean up my desk. Shortly after my arrival, I was surprised to hear a gentle knock at the door.

The head of one of my very good students peeked in, and he asked in a hushed tone of voice, "May I disturb you only for a moment, Orest Mikhailovich?"

"Of course, come in, come in. Sit down, please. What I can do for you?" I asked him and pointed to the open drawers, "I am not busy. I am only cleaning my drawers before the summer vacations."

"Well, Orest Mikhailovich, I really don't know how to start," my student began with hesitation. "I respect you very much and felt that you should know about it."

"If you think that I should know it, then go ahead and tell me," I answered almost jokingly.

"You see," he started with embarrassment, "we were sworn to secrecy by comrade Perekotiyenko..."

"Oh, him! Don't worry, I will keep your secret! What is it?"

"Well, late last night all students who are members of the

Bolshevik Party were called for a secret meeting by comrade Perekotiyenko. After swearing us to secrecy, he told us that he is organizing for tomorrow—that means tonight—an extraordinary meeting of all Rabfak students, faculty, and the miners to be held in the Miners' Club; there he will expose and unmask one of the Rabfak's administrators as an 'enemy of the people.' He said that he received very compromising information from an absolutely reliable source, which had to remain anonymous and could not be revealed under any circumstances, that Rabfak Assistant Director Gladky is a former *byelogvardyeyets* and a *lishenyets*." ¹ My student stopped for a while, waiting for my reaction.

But I told him only, "Well, go on, go on."

And he proceeded, "You know that comrade Perekotiyenko is our *Partorg* ² and that we have to obey his orders if we want to keep our student's stipend intact. So, he ordered all of us to be on time tonight in the Miners' Club and sit in the first rows. Then he gave us exact instructions as to how we should loudly support him when he asks from the stage for Gladky's expulsion from his position as assistant director at the Rabfak. At the end he emphasized again that we absolutely should not tell anybody about what will be on the meeting's agenda, explaining that, in order to be effective, his presentation should be a complete surprise."

I commented, "A complete surprise, yah?"

After a short pause the student added, "Oh, yes, the most important thing that you should know is that comrade Perekotiyenko will send students to personally invite all teachers, the Rabfak director, and you, Orest Mikhailovich, to attend this meeting as representatives of the Rabfak administration and faculty. Other students will be sent to inform all miners' communist cells to send their members to the meeting."

"Well, well, well," I concluded, "nobody from the higher-ups listens to comrade Perekotiyenko's stories anymore. So, he decided to force people to listen to him. He needed a big audience."

The student got up, saying, "That's all that I came to tell you. I'd better be going before somebody sees me here. I knew that you are coming to work very early in the morning and are here when the janitor opens the door. Orest Mikhailovich, I wish that everything goes well for you at the meeting tonight."

"Thank you, my friend, thank you for warning me. At least I will be ready to defend myself," I said to my student, who quickly disappeared behind the door. I swiftly finished collecting my belongings in a box and wrote a letter of resignation.

As soon as the Rabfak director came in, I went to see him with all my end-of-the-year reports under my left arm and a letter of resignation in my right hand. I placed the reports carefully on the director's desk and handed him my letter of resignation.

As the director started to read it, I anticipated his questions by pointing to the file, "Everything is completed, and there is nothing left for me to do." And without losing precious time, I asked him decisively, "May I have your permission to leave right away? I am sorry to be in such a hurry, but I need to be in Kisyelyevka today at my new place of employment to be briefed about my duties by my new superior." Then I added, as if trying to justify myself, "You know, vacations are starting and all have so little time on the last day of school."

"Of course, you may leave immediately," the surprised director told me and asked, "But why didn't you tell me earlier that you were planning to quit your position here? I would have understood, with Perekotiyenko giving you so much trouble."

"I didn't want to disrupt a smooth process at the end of the school year. Besides, I was not yet sure if they would hire me over there."

"I will miss you," said the director with regret in his voice, "and will miss your efficiency and precision in your work. Students also are losing an excellent teacher. Well, good luck to you on your new job."

As he shook my hand, I said, "I hope you will find another person who will be an even better assistant director than I was. Have a nice vacation. I hope we will see each other during regional meetings the next school year." And I left immediately without saying goodbye to anybody else.

When I arrived home so early in the morning, I told the surprised Tonya our coined phrase, "It's time to go!"

"What happened?" she asked me anxiously. "You were supposed to leave at the end of the day."

I saw my daughter Lyalya looking at me puzzled and trying to figure out what I meant by such a short and mysterious phrase. I told my daughter to go outside and play, because I needed to talk

to her mother about some very serious decisions. I saw that she understood from the tone of our voices that something unpleasant had happened to me and, although she was very curious about what was going on, she did not dare complain about being excluded from our conversation, as she usually did on other occasions. But as she was walking out of our room, she asked me, "Is it again that damn Bolshevik Perekotiyenko?"

I tried to squeeze a smile and answered, "Who else could it be? Of course, it's him."

When Lyalya was gone, I told Tonya about my student's visit early in the morning and that I'd given my letter of resignation as soon as the Rabfak director had entered his office this morning. I explained my suspicions further, "I think that there was a well-organized plot between the two comrades Bolsheviks—Blondie's husband and Perekotiyenko—to get rid of me and of us. Perekotiyenko doesn't have the brains to find out such details about me. Besides, it was Blondie who found out from Lyalya that my father lived in Nikitovka. The information about me could have been found only over there. My student also told me that this information came from a very reliable source, which could not be named."

"I agree," confirmed Tonya, "it all started here in our apartment."

We decided that I would immediately go to the hamlet of Kisyelyevka and make all the arrangements with the administration for an apartment. Also, I would ask if they still had that opening for a teacher of Russian and tell them that Tonya was available for an interview.

"What shall I say, if the students come here to call you for the meeting?"

"I don't think they will come here. They should go to my office at the Rabfak. The secretary may not know yet that I have resigned and left for good. They probably will leave the message for me with her. What a disappointment it will be for comrade Perekotiyenko not seeing me at the meeting!"

Tonya placed in a small briefcase a change of underwear, socks, and shirts for me, and we agreed that I would not come back to Snyezhnoye until an apartment in Kisyelyevka was ready to move in.

We called Lyalya into the room and told her not to talk with

Blondie about anything. She felt tension in our voices and asked if her silence was important for my welfare. "Very important," I replied. And she promised to avoid our neighbor.

Blondie didn't see me leaving the apartment that morning. Tonya told me later that she and her husband kept themselves very quiet in their room during the evening, as if expecting to hear my reaction when I returned home from the meeting. Tonya put Lyalya to bed early, and an unusual quiet enveloped the apartment. The next morning Tonya gave Lyalya very strict orders not to talk to Blondie about her father's whereabouts. "If she would dare to ask you where your father is, answer that you don't know." Lyalya couldn't figure out what her father's departure had to do with Blondie and asked her mother about it. But Tonya told her only that there was a very serious reason for it.

Besides, Tonya was now on vacation, and Blondie couldn't bother Lyalya any more. Blondie didn't ask Tonya anything about my whereabouts—her husband probably knew that I had resigned from Rabfak. Tonya packed all our belongings, getting everything ready for me to move us to our new apartment in Kisyelyevka.

In a few days, as it was planned before all this happened, Tonya and Lyalya departed for the summer vacation to Slavyansk Kurort, as they had every summer. There Lyalya received therapy with hot, salty mud applications to the affected left side of her face.

They left the hamlet of Snyezhnoye early in the morning by hiring the man with the horse and carriage to take them to the station at Chistyakovo. Since on their way they had to go through the hamlet of Kisyelyevka, they stopped to see me, and Tonya had time to have an interview with the Rabfak director for a position as a teacher of Russian language and literature. With her credentials of several years of experience in teaching adults, she had no difficulty being hired on the spot.

We also had time to see where we would live and to see our apartment that was being painted at that time. Tonya was surprised to find out that we would have an apartment with two rooms and a kitchen all for ourselves and asked me several times if I was sure that there would be nobody else sharing it with us.

When our apartment was ready, I hired a man with a horse and a cart and went to Snyezhnoye to move our belongings. Our

neighbor, a husband of a doctor, saw me and invited me to visit him in his apartment before I left. He said to me that he had something very interesting to tell me, because he had attended that extraordinary meeting in the miners' club. He gave me a complete report with many sarcastic comments about what went on during that meeting and what was said there. I still remember it almost word for word.

Although Perekotiyenko made sure that there were plenty of people at the meeting, knowing him as a troublemaker, no one from the authorities showed up. Besides, this was the last day before the school vacations, and everybody was getting ready to leave for somewhere. Blondie's husband didn't go to the meeting, either.

From the club's stage Perekotiyenko had made a typical Bolshevik's speech about the "enemies of the people." Then he continued, "They hide their past and meanwhile grab the positions of authority that rightfully belong to the deserving members of the Bolshevik party. That's what happened at our Rabfak."

After a moment of dramatic silent suspense he proceeded to denounce me, "Now is the time to unmask the social status of one of our administrators, Assistant Director Orest Mikhailovich Gladky, who has concealed his past. It was I who was notified by a very reliable source that he is a former *byelovgardyeyets* who fought against us, the Communists-Bolsheviks during the civil war. For this reason, he was rightfully deprived of civil rights to vote! Now this *lishenyets* is occupying a post of responsibility to educate you, the workers!"

Perekotiyenko made a sign with his arms to students sitting in the first rows to stand up and said solemnly, "Comrades students, what do you say to this 'enemy of the people?'" Students got up, raised their fisted hands, and threateningly swinging their arms, started to shout, "Expulsion! Expulsion! Expulsion!" Some people in the audience joined the students, and for a while, there was a big commotion and noise in the hall.

Then Perekotiyenko signaled with his hands to the students to sit down and, when silence fell in the audience, he proceeded with the next step and ordered, "Comrades students and miners, let's vote! All those who are for the expulsion of the Rabfak Assistant Director Gladky from his position at the Rabfak, raise

your hands!" All students, as they had been ordered, raised their hands. Slowly some hands went up among the miners sitting in the hall.

"The proposition is accepted unanimously!" declared Perekotiyenko. "We will write a report to the Rabfak director and to the Regional Commissariat of People's Education requesting that they fire Gladky."

The well-orchestrated meeting was coming almost successfully to a close when a young woman sitting on the end of the second row got up and asked permission to make a comment. Perekotiyenko recognized her as a secretary of the Rabfak director and, hoping to hear a supportive statement from her, told her to go ahead and speak. It was so unexpected that the audience became very quiet, waiting to hear what she had to say.

She positioned herself comfortably against the sidewall, making sure that everybody could see and hear her. Then, looking at the stage clearly and simply, she asked, "Comrade Partorg, don't you know that Assistant Director Gladky is not working anymore at the Rabfak?" To this unexpected comment, the audience responded with a roar of laughter.

Without answering her question, the embarrassed Perekotiyenko announced that the meeting was closed while people were already getting up from their seats and starting to move slowly toward the exit. They were all in a happy mood, like after an entertaining show, exchanging their comments and telling jokes about Perekotiyenko's bad timing.

When our neighbor finished telling this story, he asked me, "Why didn't you mention to me that you served in the White Army? Maybe we would have found that we served in the same battalion!"

"My dear friend," I told him, "you know very well that one cannot tell these things to anybody. You never know who your neighbor is. And I don't want that you tell me anything about your past, either. Let's assume that tomorrow I would be arrested and interrogated, and they would force me to tell what I know about you. I am not a hero. I couldn't withstand torture or a threat to my family if they tried to force me to talk. No, my friend, for your own good, I don't want to know anything about your past. Let's remain friends." And we said goodbye to each other and shook hands, keeping our secrets to ourselves.

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1. An individual who is deprived of civil rights.
 2. *Partorg*—acronym for Party Organizer



Hamlet Kisyelyevka

By Orest M. Gladky

In the summer of 1932, I was hired in an administrative position¹ and started my work as an assistant director of curriculum at the Rabfak in the hamlet of Kisyelyevka.² One of my major duties was to prepare schedules for all teachers and students for the new school year and to coordinate other educational activities. Although all other faculty members and students were on summer vacation, I had worked the whole summer with only the help of a secretary to get everything ready to open the Rabfak's doors on the first of September. When everything was ready, I took a few days off for a short visit to see my sister Vera in Nikitovka and returned to the hamlet of Kisyelyevka before Tonya and Lyalya returned home from their vacation in Slavyansk.

I arrived back at the railroad station of Chistyakovo³ in the last days of August. From the station there was no transportation available to the hamlet of Kisyelyevka, and I had to walk. It was cloudy after several days of continuous rain and no relief in sight. The leaden sky made everything look gray, people and buildings. The ankle-high, soft, watery mud was covering almost completely the only paved road called, *shossay*.⁴ It led from the station of Chistyakovo through the center of the town of Chistyakovo, and then through the center of the hamlet of Kisyelyevka to the coal mine named Kiselev, which was about a mile from the hamlet, and ended near the mine at the ravine.

As I walked through the soft mud, I occasionally found some clear spots with small sharp stones, which I felt under the soles of galoshes covering my shoes. I thought, "How long would my galoshes or the soles of my shoes last before they would be worn out, if I had to walk on it every day?" It was a very reasonable concern. After all, in those days it was not easy to buy new ones.

In the hamlet, on both sides of the road were rows of brick buildings built in a hurry during the recent industrialization

period to house the influx of workers and employees to the coal-mining region of the Ukraine. On one side of the road, there were the so-called *zhyl-co-ops*,⁵ where white-collar workers, employees, management personnel, and party officials of the mine were housed. These were three-story buildings with multiple chimneys, some for tiled heating stoves installed in each apartment room and others for brick kitchen stoves. Many blocks of four multi-dwelling buildings forming large rectangular courtyards followed each other.

On the other side of the road, there were the so-called *shakhtyersky co-ops*, or the miners' co-ops, two-story buildings, with chimneys only for the kitchen stoves, because one central heating system for all buildings was planned but was never built. Therefore, for heating the miners used cast-iron stoves. The facades of those buildings were picturesque, in the new soviet style. There was a forest of multi-shaped iron pipes sticking through the windowpanes like branches on dead trees. From the pipes emanated a dark smoke from burning coal that made strange designs over the surface of the brick walls.

On both sides of the road, there was space left for the sidewalks and tree borders. The sidewalk was not built yet, though the construction of the houses had been completed several years ago, and in bad weather one had to walk from the road to the houses through deep, dense mud. As for the trees, they were replanted every year by the hamlet inhabitants during the so-called *subotnik*⁶ days, in which every dweller of the apartments had to participate. This replanting was needed, because one could not easily find wood for starting the fires in the stoves, and every winter those young trees were pulled out with the roots by the same inhabitants who'd planted them.

This new place where my family and I would be living did not make any special impression on me, since I had gotten used to this kind of gray-looking new socialist-style building. However, what was a pleasant surprise for me was to have the whole apartment only for my family. This was a luxury according to the socialist standard. Our apartment consisted of two rooms, a small entrance hall, and a kitchen. Yes, there was also one door to what seemed to be a small closet, which I found out was supposed to have been a toilet, not a bathroom, but it had never been equipped either with plumbing or with fixtures.

Another noted feature of the cooperative housing was that, in order to speed up the construction and reduce the costs, there was no plumbing installed in the apartments for water or for sewer. To supply water for the inhabitants of four three-story buildings surrounding the courtyard, there was one communal faucet in the middle of it.

For some unknown reason or poor planning, the water from that faucet was always running in a lazy, unhurried, thin stream. To get the water, women, men, and children had to stay in line for a long time under any weather conditions—in the hot summer days, in the wet rainy days, or in the cold freezing winter days. Then one had to bring the pails of water—for drinking, cooking, washing, bathing, washing clothes, or floors—all the way up to the first, second, or third floor.

But what goes up, must come down; since there were no sewer draining pipes in the buildings, the used dirty water had to be collected in slop-pails, which had to be brought down to be discarded in the courtyard, supposedly in the open refuse pit.

And as to the elimination of bodily waste, all the inhabitants had to run downstairs from the first, second, and third floors to the outside, where in the middle of the courtyard was a long wooden outhouse built over a deep pit. This had to be used by all who lived in that block of four three-story buildings. The outhouse was divided lengthwise by a thin wooden wall in two parts, one half for men, and the other for women, and on the inside along the dividing wall, there was one long, elevated bench-like seat with multiple round holes intended for the sitting position. Such luxury was contrary to what was expected of the Soviet “architects.” You also had to forget about any privacy there!

In addition, since nobody was in charge of daily cleaning of the outhouse, most of the time it was unusable between the occasional cleanings with the hoses from a mobile cistern with water and a disinfectant with lime. The stench was so horrible that one could not stay inside for the length of time needed for bodily functions. Since most of the time it was almost unusable, at night some dwellers used the courtyard for this purpose, accommodating themselves wherever they could find a clean place along the buildings’ walls that provided cover from behind.

But most families used the old-fashioned solution to provide

for these biological necessities by using a chamber pot and a slop-pail stored in the supposed-to-be-toilet-room and bringing the waste downstairs in the courtyard; it was discarded anywhere that one was willing to carry it. Some would carry it all the way to pour it in a large open refuse pit dug near the outhouse, or splash it inside the outhouse itself, that is if the weather was good. Many others, especially in the cold winter days when the snow was covering up the ground and all the mess, would just pour it right next to the back-door entrance of the building.

When the winter was over and the snow melted, in the courtyard and around the buildings there would appear the “flowerbeds” of the smelly “winter flowers.” The whole hamlet would be wrapped up in a smothering stench. The inhabitants who lived, like I lived with my family, high on the third floor were lucky—there the smell was considerably diluted with the fresh air coming from the open fields surrounding the hamlet.

Electricity was provided, or as it was coined “given,”⁷ to all dwellers in a limited quantity for each family and strictly only for lighting purposes. Electric appliances, which were not too many available at that time, were not allowed. For heating and cooking, all workers and employees received a reasonable amount of coal that was stored in the basement of the building in individual cubicles. Every day one member of the family had to carry up the stairs one or more pails of a local anthracite⁸ that would be sufficient for twenty-four hours of burning to keep the fire constantly alive, because wood to start the fire was very difficult to find—it was mostly discarded wood supports from the mine tunnels. Most of the miners brought this wood home from the mine as they changed shifts, while all other inhabitants received it in small, rationed quantities, usually insufficient for the whole cold season.

Hamlet Kiselyevka was several times larger than the hamlet of Snyezhnoye, and it was very close to the town of Chistyakovo, where one could find more services than in the small hamlets. There was a market where the peasants brought some fresh produce, which they were allowed to cultivate on their small lots. And there was a so-called cooperative grocery store that, as a matter of fact, was state-owned. In addition, there was a state-owned delicatessen where one could buy at inflated prices many products considered luxury items that were not available in the

cooperative store. We were lucky to live very close to the Rabfak and to the miners' cooperative store and, therefore, didn't have to walk great distances every day.

The Rabfak in Kisyelyevka had such a large enrollment that, to accommodate all students, classes had to be switched to three shifts, and the school was open from eight o'clock in the morning to nine o'clock at night. Both Tonya and I had to teach some classes during the day shifts and some others during the evening shift, and this was posing a problem of what to do with our daughter at night, because we didn't like to leave her alone in the apartment.

On some evenings our daughter stayed with her girlfriend, Tamara, who lived on the same floor in the apartment next door. On some evenings, when she was invited, we allowed her to stay with a girl of the same age, a daughter of a very nice, but aloof and very private Jewish couple who were also teaching at Rabfak and lived in the hamlet not far from us in another building of *zhyl-co-op*.

On those nights that I had experiments or demonstrations in the chemistry or biology laboratory, my daughter stayed with me and observed as I prepared all chemical ingredients and implements or samples before students came into the classroom. I did allow her to help me to bring some implements into class and to stay there to see the experiments and demonstrations. Then during the lecture she stayed in the laboratory room doing her school assignments or reading books.



Orest M. Gladky in the Chemistry Laboratory at Rabfak. Hamlet Kisyelyevka, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1934. Photo by Olga Gladkaya.

Since, before the school year started, the administration was not able to find a teacher of biology, I had to teach it until a qualified teacher was found. Thus, in the beginning of the school year, my daily routine at the Rabfak was twelve to fourteen forty-five-minute lectures or laboratory classes in biology and in chemistry and a few hours a day distributed between classes as an assistant director of curriculum.

Later, when a biology teacher was found, I continued the lectures and laboratory in chemistry and the rest of the time occupied myself with administrative duties. In addition, several times a week after the school hours all faculty members had to attend either the obligatory faculty meetings, or workshops on upgrading the political education in a doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, or on the history of the Bolshevik party.

On the days off, Saturdays and Sundays, there were often some kinds of *subotnik*, either for the school, the hamlet, or the coal mine. On those days that we had to help the miners to fulfill their tonnage quota of coal production—always planned by the central Soviet government so high that it was impossible to produce—we had to go down in the mine.

All other workers, employees, teachers, students, engineers, technicians, and even the teenagers had to “obligatory-volunteer” on the days off from their regular occupations to help the miners to reach and to top the target tonnage by ten, twenty, or more percent.

All so-called “volunteers” were organized in small teams of about ten to fifteen persons, and their attendance was registered and reported to the party headquarters. They were closely supervised by the appointed Bolshevik Party political ringleaders, such as, *politruk*,⁹ *partorg*,¹⁰ secretary of *Profkom*¹¹ or of a *Komsomol*¹² cell.

In addition, that year, new directives came from Moscow requiring all teachers to be enrolled in programs upgrading their specialization and eventually, in a reasonable length of time, to receive teachers’ certificates in their respective subject matter. Therefore, both of us, Tonya and I, enrolled in correspondence courses at Moscow Pedagogical Institute in our subject matter divisions—I, in chemistry and biology, and Tonya, in Russian language and literature. During the summer school vacations we had to travel to Moscow and for several weeks take yearly examinations and attend the required series of lectures.

All hours of our life were scheduled almost minute by minute not only during the school time, but also in so-called “free time.” Tonya had to get up early and, before school started, walk all the way to the market in Chistyakovo to find some fresh produce and then hurry to be on time for her first class at the Rabfak. Then, after the morning shift, on her way home she had to stop at the miners’ cooperative to buy bread and staple foods, whichever were available on the shelves that day, and hurry home to cook lunch and supper so we could finish eating on time for teaching in the afternoon and night shifts.

My morning duties at home included taking the slop-pails downstairs and bringing up to the third floor the pails with clean water from the courtyard faucet. Then I had to bring the pails of coal from the basement storage. In the winter I had to remove the ashes from all stoves, fill them with fresh coal, and regulate the pipe draft to keep the fire going until we returned home. In the summer I had to prepare the kitchen stove to be ready to start when Tonya returned home to cook.

At the Rabfak, most of the time between day and evening

shifts, I had to catch up with some of my administrative duties or try out some of the experiments in the chemistry laboratory. On the days we received our salary, I usually found the time to walk to Chistyakovo to buy some cold cuts or canned goods and chocolates that the Soviet government allowed us to buy once in a while at inflated prices at the state-owned delicatessen.

Therefore, there was little time left for us to dedicate to our family life and to our daughter. Even at night we stayed late correcting students' assignments and preparing lessons for the next day and, of course, working on our own assignments for the correspondence courses, which had to be mailed on time to the institute in Moscow. However, this was the time that all three of us were together at home and shared the company of each other.

Lyalya learned very fast to help her mother to correct piles of students' work, especially dictations in Russian, which was the main teaching method used at that time. Lyalya compared the first few papers to the sample with the correct spelling and quickly memorized it—the rest of the papers she corrected from memory. In the evening Lyalya also used to read books, and sometimes it was hard to force her to turn off the light when we were going to bed, usually not earlier than midnight.

During the summer vacations, we had to travel to the capital of the Soviet Union for the summer sessions of students enrolled in the correspondence courses of the Moscow Pedagogical Institute. We used to bring Lyalya to stay for several weeks either with my sister Anya in Taganrog or with Tonya's sister Tanya in Stalino,¹³ where she kept company with her cousin Murochka.¹⁴

Then, every summer during the rest of the remaining vacation, Tonya and Lyalya went to Slavyansk Kurort and stayed as boarders in a cottage that they had patronized for several years. In the morning Lyalya would have heat therapy with the hot, salty mud¹⁵ applications to the left side of her face, and Tonya would take a relaxing bath therapy of warmed saltwater from the lake. During the hot part of the day, they rested in the pine forest park, lying in a hammock hung between the trunks of tall pine trees. And toward the evening, when the sun was low, they went to sunbathe on the sandy beach and to bathe in the Salty Lake. On some afternoons they traveled on the local branch train, called Vyетка to the town of Slavyansk and visited Tonya's father, who during their stay at the Kurort usually tailored Lyalya's winter

coats from my old suits.

After the first year of teaching in Kiselyevka, at the end of the summer vacations, when Tonya was returning with Lyalya from Slavyansk to the hamlet of Kiselyevka, she had a strange encounter.¹⁶ She had just gotten out of the train at the railroad station of Chistyakovo, which was the closest station for both hamlets Snyezhnoye and Kiselyevka, and was walking through the waiting room when she saw a red-haired woman with a baby in her arms. The woman was smiling and walking toward her, calling her name, "Wait, Antonina Gavriylovna!" Tonya looked puzzled at the woman.

"Don't you recognize me?" the woman asked in disbelief. "I lived with you in the same apartment in the hamlet of Snyezhnoye."

"A-ah," answered Tonya, realizing that the woman was Blondie, "I didn't recognize you. What happened to your hair?"

"Well, now I have a baby and don't have time anymore to bleach my hair," responded Blondie. Then she added in a demure voice, "I am so glad that I encountered you, because I wanted so much to show you my son."

Tonya glanced quickly at the baby, saying, "Congratulations, you have a very beautiful baby."

"Yes, yes, he is very beautiful," answered Blondie in a trembling voice and tears in her eyes. Then she asked Tonya, "Do you remember when we quarreled because I was so arrogant to call your daughter offensive names?"

"Yes, I remember!" answered Tonya bitterly.

"Well, I remember every day what you told me at that time," replied Blondie. "Your exact words were: 'How would you feel if you had a child with an affliction and people called him offensive names?'"

"Yes, I remember!"

"Well, God has punished me for being cruel to your daughter. Look how God has punished me!" Blondie turned the baby's face toward Tonya and said, "Look at my son's eyes! He was born with walleyes; doctors call it the very fancy name *leucoma* of the cornea. Every time I look at my child, I ask forgiveness for my insolence and for the great injustice I did to you and to your daughter!"

"Poor child," said Tonya looking at the eyes of a little boy

whose eyeballs were completely covered with a non-transparent white membrane. "Can anything be done for him?" she inquired.

"That's what we are going to find out with my husband in Kharkov. We are going there for a consultation with a well-known professor."

Tonya saw Blondie's husband near the door to the platform; he was waving to his wife to hurry up.

"Please forgive me for what I have done to you and your daughter," said Blondie, lightly touching Tonya's hand. "Maybe your forgiveness shall bring luck for my son."

Tonya just nodded her head without saying a word. In her heart she was sorry for the little boy, but she could not erase her bitterness toward this woman in her mind. "Yes, God has punished Blondie severely for her injustice to my daughter. Now she knows how I felt when my daughter's face became paralyzed."

Blondie looked at Lyalya and remarked, "Your daughter's face has improved. Did you find some effective treatment for her?"

"Yes," replied Tonya, "applications of warm mud from the Salty Lake."

Blondie's husband continued to call her, and she left saying again, "Please forgive me..."

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1. See the chapter "The Extraordinary Meeting."
 2. Hamlet adjacent to the coalmine named Kisyev, in honor of a Bolshevik who had earned a mine named after him for his political deeds.
 3. A railroad station and a town in the coal-mining Donetsk region of Ukraine.
 4. Macadam road of small broken stones rolled on earth roadbed.
 5. *Zhyl-co-op*—Cooperative dwellings, a misnomer, because they were state property.
 6. A day of "obligatory-volunteer" work on projects for public interest, or governmental interest, such as increase in the production of coal, etc.
 7. The cost of electricity was included in the rent.
 8. Hard coal of best quality because it burns cleaner with less smoke in comparison to other types of coal.

9. *Politrak*—acronym for *Politichesky rukovodiytel*—Political leader.
10. *Partorg*—acronym for *Partiyny organizator*—Party organizer.
11. *Profkom*—acronym for *Professionalny kommityet*—Professional committee.
12. *Komsomol*—acronym for *Kommunistichesky Soyuz Molodyezhy*—The Young Communists League.
13. Former name Yuzovka, renamed by the Bolsheviks to Stalino.
14. Diminutive nickname of Marianna.
15. Mud taken from the bottom of *Solyenoye Ozero*—Salty Lake.
16. Based on the memories of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky.



In the Waiting Room

By Antonina G. Gladky and Orest M. Gladky

This episode happened on my journey home from Kisselyevka to my hometown of Slavyansk in the summer of 1932–1933. By foot I reached the station of Chistyakovo and from there by train to the station of Ylovayskaya. Regrettably, I had to wait there in the waiting room until morning for the connecting train to Slavyansk. At about ten o'clock that night all the main line trains had passed through, and the station was filled with passengers waiting for connections to the branch lines trains. Unfortunately, most of these did not leave till the next morning, so the people already fatigued by a long journey had no other choice but to spend the night in the stuffy railroad station's waiting rooms, sitting wherever they could find a place on hard wooden benches and in uncomfortable positions.

They all hurried to the first- or second-class waiting rooms to secure the most comfortable seats. However, after one hour the cleaners arrived to clean the rooms and asked the passengers to leave. So they gathered up their belongings and went, grumbling and unwillingly, out onto the platform, but there they were also told, "Pass along to the third-class waiting room. No one is allowed to remain on the platform."

The enormous third-class waiting room was already full of people sleeping or dozing. The noise of the newcomers woke some, but they did not alter their positions. The upper-classes passengers examined the room carefully to find somewhere to sit down, but all the benches were already occupied. Maybe a few managed to squeeze here and there into a small space, but the remainder, including me, had to sit on the floor on their luggage. And those who had no luggage to sit on had only a few choices, either to find a spot and sit on the stone floor, or walk up and down all night along the narrow passage between the sleeping people, threading between their arms and legs, or lean up somewhere against the wall and stand there till morning. But

those who at first decided to walk or stand changed their minds very soon, and one by one settled onto the floor.

After midnight the room grew quiet. Hanging from the ceiling like some great monster was a huge, dirty chandelier covered with cobwebs. Its lamps were extinguished. The light coming from the two small electric lanterns over the empty buffet threw distorted shadows of the chandelier on the ceiling and down the opposite wall. Moths fluttered around the lights, and silly flies and maybugs buzzed against the glass. The walls were smoke-soiled and looked almost black, giving the whole place a gloomy appearance.

The air was foul, and the sound of heavy breathing by several hundreds of sleeping people was oppressive. In this comfortless place to sleep, one could at times hear a baby crying, or someone groaning, or coughing, or sighing deeply. There was nobody walking in the room. It appeared haunted and depressed, as if the people, driven there by some compulsion and lacking the strength to resist, were subject to a harsh domination by some unseen evil spirit from which there was no escape!

At about two o'clock at night, the light bulbs of the chandelier were lighted. Someone who was aware of the significance of this ill-omened illumination cautiously opened his eyes and nudged his neighbor as if by accident. In a few moments, this watchfulness was communicated to the whole room. The man lying on the floor next to me pushed with his elbow in my back, and I gave a few tugs to my neighbor's coat sleeve. Most kept their eyes shut, but there was a feeling of uneasiness, and people were just pretending to sleep, expecting something to happen. The heavy breathing and coughing stopped, and a strange silence embraced the whole room. All were waiting...

The creaking of the door hinges broke this silence and, through barely opened eyelids, I could see that a man had entered. He was of medium height, strong, muscular, and clean-shaven. Although it was summer, he wore a long great coat and a peaked service cap with the red band around it. Through my semi-closed eyes, I saw the familiar uniform, and it flashed in my mind, *A GPU agent!* And I continued to watch him.

He began to walk slowly between the sleeping people, staring intently at their faces. Sometimes he stopped and slowly looked around. Under his searching gaze, the inexperienced passenger

began to cringe away. The GPU agent looked at him a little longer, then abruptly turned and stared with the same sharp eye at the person next to him. If his searching scrutiny didn't reveal anything in the face of this unfortunate passenger, he moved on, treading noiselessly in his soft boots and glancing ahead. Now and then, he stopped and examined with the same attention the passengers who were keeping their eyes shut; then, again he moved forward, threading his way through the people lying on the floor.

Suddenly he stopped not far from the buffet and fixed his eyes on a passenger who was asleep on a bench near there. It appeared that this man was so sound asleep that neither the glare from the unexpectedly lighted chandelier nor the uneasiness of the rest of the people had disturbed him, but those sitting close to him could feel how irregular his breathing had become and could see the shudders that were running through his body. For a few minutes the GPU agent studied this passenger attentively and then, touching him on the arm, said very quietly but firmly, "Come with me."

The passenger continued pretending to be asleep, trying to put off the fatal moment, but, feeling a painful grip on his arm, he yawned and opened his eyes. "Follow me," said the GPU agent quietly as before.

The passenger jumped up, red spots appeared on his pallid cheeks. He tried to look as if he did not understand what was happening and asked, "What is the matter?"

The GPU agent repeated, "Follow me."

The passenger dropped his head in resignation and with a feverish look, followed the GPU agent toward the exit door.

They had scarcely left the room when the seemingly sleeping people woke up and began to stir. They opened their eyes, turned toward their neighbors, made some remarks in a low voice, and the same words could be heard on all sides: "They've taken him away!"

In a few minutes the GPU agent returned to the waiting room. The passengers again pretended to be asleep, though now not all of them could conceal their agitation, and the GPU agent had no difficulty seeing through their apparent sleep. But it was obvious that he knew perfectly well from experience that there were probably no politically dangerous suspects among these

trembling people, who so obviously were pretending to be asleep. The “enemies of the Soviet state” were to be found amongst those who appeared to be sleeping peacefully and innocently.

Slowly, as before, he was making his way toward the buffet, close to which I was sitting on my suitcase. I was not sleeping. I watched his every movement. Now I was able to see him very close. *Stepan Bolotov* flashed in my mind. For a moment, our eyes met. But he quickly moved his eyes away from me and, looking contemptuously at the cowardly ones, allowed his eyes to travel slowly from face to face, till they again rested on another peacefully “sleeping” passenger.

Laying his hand on the arm of the victim, once again he said, “Follow me.” The passenger opened his eyes. He appeared to be calm. He even looked with an air of surprise at the man in uniform, who repeated his order.

“What do you want? Here are my documents. You can examine them here.”

But the agent insisted, “Follow me. We will check your documents there.”

“Very well, I will come,” declared the passenger with a rather threatening look and walked swiftly toward the exit; the GPU agent followed him closely. Just before he reached the door, the passenger suddenly turned around toward the agent and punched him in the face with such force that the agent fell to the floor. The passenger rushed through the door and disappeared into the darkness on the barely illuminated platform.

The room was struck dumb with terror. The GPU agent remained for a few seconds on the stone floor without moving. Then he gradually came to his senses and, recovering full consciousness, he remembered what had happened and, rising swiftly, hurried out.

An oppressive half-hour followed. The people knew that some terrible reaction by the GPU agents was about to happen, because the chandelier was still brightly lighting the room, and, outside on the platform, hasty steps and shouts could be heard. Passengers exchanged glances and whispered to each other. Some couldn’t hide their extreme anxiety. One could feel that people were seeking to find a way to escape. They were greatly agitated and looking for some means to save themselves. But there was nothing they could do. They were trapped in this huge waiting

room like animals in a cage.

The creaking of the door warned them of the return of the GPU agents. This time there were several of them. The petrified people didn't pretend to sleep anymore, and they watched every move of the agents with strained attention. The GPU agents began checking the documents. No one escaped this ordeal. At four o'clock in the morning, the first of the local trains was due to leave, but none of the passengers was able to travel by it, because the check-up had not been completed, and no one was permitted to leave the waiting room. Many of the travelers had to wait another twenty-four hours to catch the next morning's train. As the documents were checked, the passengers were ordered to move to the left or to the right side of the room, and one could only suspect that there was some difference between those who were on the right, because there were fewer of them than those on the left. "Probably they will be checked more thoroughly in the GPU offices," I thought.

By half-past-four, the agents began to hurry, and the checking of the documents became selective. Now they did not look inside of all passengers' papers. They inspected the papers of some passengers more attentively and allowed the others just to flash their papers in front of them and asked them only, "Where are you coming from?" or "Where are you going?" And, if they were satisfied with the answer, they directed them to the left and let them through without opening the documents.

When my turn came, I held my train ticket high above my head and waved my hand very casually almost like teasing the agent, "Here it is—take it and check it!"

The GPU agent looked straight in my eyes and asked, "Where are you going?"

I answered promptly, "Home, to Slavyansk."

The GPU agent did not look at my ticket but simply gestured for me to pass to the left side of the room. For some unknown reason, I did not appear suspicious to him.

The GPU agents did not finish their inspection till five o'clock in the morning. About seventy men were on the right side of the room; they were held as "suspects" and taken to the local GPU prison. I was lucky—I was free. The others were not as fortunate. I heard that after a few months in prison, they were all sent to concentration camps without a trial. In those days, such tragic

occurrences happened often in the life of ordinary people.

1. See the chapters “Sharing the Apartment” and “Hamlet Kisyelyevka.”
2. From photograph of Tamara and Olga Gladky in 1933–34. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.
3. The Game of a Fool.
4. See the chapter “My Childhood in Snyezhnoye.”
5. The agents of KGB—acronym for *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Byesopastnosti*—a Committee of State Security.



On Winter Vacation

By Orest M. Gladky

During the first half of the 1933–1934 school year of teaching at the Rabfak¹ in the hamlet of Kisyelyevka,² Tonya and I adjusted ourselves to our new place of employment, to our colleagues and superiors, and to the ever-present sniffing Bolshevik watchdogs. I was somewhat puzzled that they hadn't picked up the scent of suspicion toward my past that could have been generated from the meeting in the neighboring hamlet of Snyezhnoye³ that occurred after my abrupt resignation from the Rabfak. I didn't yet detect any signs that the revelations about my past by the *Partorg*⁴ Perekotiyenko during the extraordinary meeting there had been taken seriously by his superiors.

Then, just one day before the winter vacations at the Rabfak in Kisyelyevka, I encountered our *Partorg*, Comrade Katsman, who asked me, "Comrade Gladky, what happened to you in the hamlet of Snyezhnoye?" I knew very well what had happened over there, as I'd found out about all the details of the extraordinary meeting from my former neighbor.

But, since this had happened after I had resigned there and quickly left the hamlet, I confidently answered, "To me? Nothing happened to me. But I heard that something happened there after I left. Exactly what happened, I don't know. I think that, with your party connections, you probably know better than me."

Surprised with my answer, Comrade Katsman said, "Well, I thought that you knew..."

"No, but I heard about it," I confirmed.

Then, he unexpectedly obliged me with the information, "I can tell you what I know about it. In the Regional Commissariat of People's Education, they consider you to be an excellent teacher and an efficient administrator. They have unanimously tabled Comrade Perekotiyenko's motion to his proposition that was the outcome of that tumultuous meeting. He was not able to back up his accusations with facts about you since his supposedly reliable

source of this information was anonymous and never revealed his name to him."

"Ah!" I replied with relief. I looked him straight in the eyes and asked bluntly, "Knowing about this incident, could you tell me, if I may continue to work here after the winter vacation?"

"Yes, yes, of course, you may work here," he replied reassuringly and added, "By the way, you might be pleased to know that Comrade Perekotiyenko applied for the position of assistant director at the Rabfak in Snyezhnoye, but he was not even considered for it by the Regional Commissariat of People's Education."

I explained for the record, "I was the second person whom he pushed out from that position believing that he would become the assistant director of the Rabfak. But everybody knows his limitations."

Although the friendly tone and the straightforward facts presented by Comrade Katsman were very reassuring, I had a mixed reaction to this conversation. I knew that my employment was depending a great deal on the quality of my work and on my experience and knowledge as a teacher, and especially on my ability to work with the adult students. For this I could depend on the evaluation and respect from a majority of my students and the teachers who were my subordinates and my friends.

But my employment depended mostly on the people in the Regional Commissariat of People's Education who, without exceptions were all Bolsheviks, and on the three persons here at the Rabfak—the director, the *partorg*, and the *Profcom*⁵ secretary. They all could do anything with the information about my past at any time and, if they wanted, they could proceed with further investigation.

The director of the Rabfak appreciated my work, and I probably could count on his support as on a rock mountain, if only... he had not been a member of the Bolshevik Party. The *partorg*, comrade Katsman, whose opinion I'd just heard, was a Rabfak student in the fourth-year course and was my student in the chemistry class. His future didn't depend on me in any way, since he would receive his passing grades from any teacher who would come after me, because of his position in the party and not necessarily for his achievement in studies. But I knew that he appreciated me as a teacher. The Profcom secretary, although a

member of the faculty, was also a member of the Bolshevik Party. He was a teacher of Political Science, now better known as "The Theory of Marxism-Leninism and History of Bolshevik Party." From my experience in other places, these teachers had very dogmatic and inflexible characters, and this one was no different from the others. However, in my favor was the fact that he wasn't interested in taking my position as an assistant director of the Rabfak.

Therefore, in the case that someone found tangible evidence of my past "sins," there was almost no hope for any support from any of them, contrary to the impression from Comrade Katsman.

What did actually happen in Snyezhnoye? About that one could write an entire book. But in essence—by the order of the *partorg* the huge collective of students "voted" for a resolution:

"Considering that Gladky appears to be 'the enemy of the people,' to request the Chistyakovsky *Gorpartcom* (Town Party Committee) and *Gorispolcom* (Town Executive Committee) for the expulsion of such person, and his family, beyond the borders of Ukraine."

This, of course, is a short quotation. The resolution listed all my political "sins", which there is no reason now to remember. But the meaning of "the expulsion beyond the borders of Ukraine"—about that, in those days, millions of people had already learned the hard way. Where did those borders end? At Solovki? At Karaganda? Or on Kolyma? All in faraway Siberia.

My future was beginning to look gloomy again. But I had a glimpse of hope that there was no immediate danger for my dismissal, and I had two weeks of vacation ahead of me to evaluate the situation and to make plans for my future.

I picked up my salary envelope at the Rabfak office and went directly to *Rabcoop*⁶ to buy a liter of vodka, which I hated to drink and rarely purchased, except in the summer season to make homemade liquor called *nalivka* with fruits. But I was hoping that this time it would allow me for one night to forget until the next morning the problem that I had to face.

When I entered the apartment and placed the bottle on the table, my wife looked at me inquisitively and asked, "What happened?"

I knew that she understood everything and answered, "Nothing, my dear. Everything is fine in this world!"

What else I could tell her in the presence of our daughter, who was then only nine years old? We brought her up protected as much as we could from revealing my past and the reasons for our constant moving from one place to another. We also protected her from communist influence and propaganda. But she didn't receive the traditional middle-class upbringing that my wife and I had.

Most important, she was brought up detached completely from religion, which we as educators could not openly practice; we were instead expected to include anti-religious teaching as a part of our curriculum in any subject. In her presence we tried not to talk with nostalgia about the past, which could have made our feelings transparent, and which she could have perceived with her young child's heart. We could not allow her to learn the truth, because in her childish naiveté she could tell her friends something that should not be told to anybody. Children talk with their friends and answer questions asked by cunning adults. More than once we witnessed how children ruined the lives of their parents with their talk. Our own daughter innocently helped with the inquiry about my past by answering the questions of our cunning neighbor in Snezhnoye.⁷

And this time, my wife and I were suddenly shocked to hear this small girl impulsively answer her mother, "Don't you know, Mama, that Papa drinks only when his heart is heavy?"

"But why should his heart be heavy?" asked my wife and added, "Tomorrow two weeks of winter vacation begins. He should be happy to have some rest. Do you think that maybe he is not happy for some reason with us?"

"No, Mama," blurted out Lyalya with a serious expression in her voice, "it is not with us that Papa is unhappy, but with the Soviet authority, which he doesn't like!"

"What are you making up, Lyalya?!" sharply interrupted my wife.

"What did it have to do with the Soviet authority?" I injected.

"Don't you dare talk rubbish!" my wife admonished her. If somebody would hear you..."

"Don't you worry about me, Mama! Do you think that I am a small girl that doesn't understand anything? Nobody will hear such things from me!" answered my daughter in a reassuring tone of voice that left no doubt that she meant it.

Conversation stopped at that point, but we understood that in our small quarters we could not hide from our daughter that occasional unfavorable word or comment, nor a sigh, or a furtive glance between us. With her intuition she perceived everything with surprising accuracy. This was the first time she actually vocalized that she understood our aversion to the Soviet authority. After supper I had a glass of *nalivka*, because I really hated to drink vodka, and then I went to bed and quickly fell asleep.

I started my winter vacation by sleeping until very late in the morning and procrastinating in getting up. Then I heard our dog, Knopsyk, lazily barking in the hall and then some knocking; my wife opened the door and saluted somebody in a friendly manner. A male voice asked for me. My wife knocked on my door, saying that somebody had come to see me. I noticed that Knopsyk had stopped barking at the visitor and that my wife's voice was calm; it meant that he was a friendly person. I sat on my bed and invited, "Come in!"

Carefully opening the door entered Maslyeyev, my former student from Rabfak in Snyezhnoye, who now was studying in the Dnyepropetrovsk Mining Institute.

"What a surprise!" I exclaimed as we shook hands and asked him to remove his winter jacket and sit down on the chair.

While I was dressing, Maslyeyev told me that he was returning home to visit his family during winter vacation. He had to walk eighteen kilometers from the station at Chistyakovo to the Coal Mine Number Nine, because there was no other way to get there. He knew from some of his friends that I had moved to the hamlet of Kisyelyevka and decided to stop and visit with me while he rested before proceeding to his home.

My wife prepared lunch, and I invited him to share our meal. *Nalivka* had remained on the table from the last evening, and we had a small glass before starting the meal. Then, knowing that the miners usually would not refuse a glass of vodka with the meal, I placed the bottle purchased yesterday on the table.

Maslyeyev was surprised to see that I had vodka in my home, because my students had never detected even the smell of alcohol on my breath. With the secret watching by the members of the Bolshevik Party at the Rabfak, nobody ever accused me of the sin of drinking. And this increased respect toward me.

"Orest Mikhailovich," Maslyeyev said jokingly, "it appears that you... I mean, you also know how to drink."

"Of course! Why should not I drink a little?" I answered him in the same tone.

"We, students, never could even imagine this about you! We were all convinced that you were a sober, non-drinking man," he confessed.

"Well, Comrade Maslyeyev, life as it is, requires that one have a drink once in a while!" I replied.

"Sure, I agree. Sometimes it happens that one has to have a drink," confirmed my guest after the first glass. After the second one, he became more talkative and less inhibited in expressing his thoughts and opinions.

I knew Maslyeyev quite well. As a student, he was not as young as the others; he was probably already thirty-two or thirty-three years old. He was a very serious person and studied very diligently. He was a member of the Communist Party, and when he was at the Rabfak, the students elected him as chairman of the *Studcom*, a Students' committee; besides, he was a real coal miner. I also knew his other attribute—he was a wonderful family man. All these traits of his character demonstrated that he was a simple, ordinary man, and in addition, unspoiled. I never heard anything bad about him.

Suddenly, contrary to all my usual precautions, I decided to become more open with him and asked, "Do you know what happened in Snyezhnoye?"

"Yes, I know. Some of my student friends wrote to me about it. But this is all rubbish, Orest Mikhailovich," he commented.

"It is very easy for you to say 'rubbish,' Comrade Maslyeyev!" I exclaimed and specified, "But, as you can see, I have a family! And outside is snow and frost!"

"But, for now, nobody has touched you?" he asked.

"But who can guarantee they will not touch me soon?" I asked him in reply. "Do I have to sit here and wait until they do? Here you came, knocked on my door, and my heart missed a beat or two."

"I can understand you," he said and after a short meditation asked me, "How are you settled here? How are they treating you here?"

"The same as they treated me in Snyezhnoye when you were

there as a chairman of the *Studcom*; all students are very happy with me. But don't I know how quickly the students' mood can change."

"Yes, I understand. You see... Students know that you are a good teacher, and they respect you with their hearts. But, you see... our party has all kinds of people. Like, for example in Snyezhnoye, Comrade Perekotiyenko. You know he had a grudge against you when I was there. But we all, the director, the *Profcom* secretary, and I, were restraining him! But he was a teacher of the Marxist-Leninist Theory and of the History of the Communist Party! With him we all had to be very careful because we were afraid that in the *Raypartcoms* they would believe him more than any of us. He was their man! And who were we? We were the masses, though we also understood something... but, our opinion doesn't count." Maslyeyev sat for a while silently and then added, "You know, Perekotiyenko was such an evil man that he would not have mercy on his own brother!"

"Why did he hate me so much?" I asked him, as I did not know the answer.

"Well, you stood in his way. I mean, you being an assistant director. And he fancied in his dreams to be in your place! Obviously, he finally had somehow dug up the information about you. And the students... well, they probably had to do it on his instructions... you know, the low-ranking party members are trained to always follow without questioning the instructions that come from somebody at the top of the party organization."

I was glad to hear his opinion but did not want to bring the conversation to the point of discussing my past any further and told him, "I did not imagine that man's vanity could blind him so much that he couldn't see his own merit! It is disgusting to even talk about the means he used in trying to get there! But it was all for nothing, because they didn't hire him in my place!" I closed our discussion with my last comment because it was becoming too dangerous for me to be asked by Maslyeyev about my past. I switched the subject to find out any news about my student. "It is better that you tell me about yourself. How successful are you in your studies over there?"

Maslyeyev emitted a long, deep sigh, like expressing sorrow about something, and then stated, "What kind of successes in my studies, Orest Mikhailovich? If I have to tell you what we were

doing in the Institute, you would not believe me! This year we have not started studying anything yet!"

"What do you mean? The whole first semester has already gone!"

"Yes, it's gone, but we didn't start the courses we were supposed to study," he answered bitterly.

"What did you do all this time?" I asked him with curiosity.

"We were studying military science and contemporary politics!" he announced solemnly and ironically. In his expression was more irony than solemnity, and he was not hiding it, probably because he was not afraid of me after our sincere conversation, and probably because several glasses of vodka had lowered his inhibition; the bitter truth was asking to come out, to be shared with somebody without fear.

"We were learning how to conduct collectivization!" he exclaimed. "And after that, we engaged in practical work. And how we practiced, Orest Mikhailovich! To tell you the truth, our share was only the remnants after the trained people had done their work. Even that was terrible..." He paused for a while, like reviewing before his eyes the scenes about which he was about to tell me and was collecting his thoughts.

Then he continued uninhibitedly, like he was pouring out what he had kept imprisoned in his mind until now, "We were traveling from village to village in Dnyepropetrovsk Agricultural Region, one of the richest regions in the Ukraine! Great extensions of fields! And even under the thick cover of snow, one felt like traveling over the fertile land. But we were not traveling on the roads; there were no roads; everything was covered with snow and huge snowdrifts. In the villages, too, there were no cleared roads. In some places the snowdrifts covered the cottage roofs... there were no fresh sled marks or human footprints, only those of wild animals and birds... Desolation was everywhere; the whole population had died out... People call it Golodomor..." Maslyeyev was talking as if in a trance, staring at the white wall and pausing between phrases and incomplete sentences.

I did not interrupt him as he continued with his story. "It was a ghastly feeling... even I felt scared. And I have seen all kinds of horrors in the mines! ...I have seen people crushed, buried alive, suffocated, and torn to pieces... I myself have been covered up with earth and coal several times... but over there I felt terrified.

"We drove and drove without seeing one live soul... around us deadly still silence... and untouched snow—the first sled marks were ours. We would drive into a village and see cottage doors and windows open. In some places the wind had already scattered the straw from the thatched roofs, all signs that nobody was there. Everything was empty and silent—one couldn't hear the barking of dogs, or mooing of cows, no bleat of sheep, no human voice. We stopped in one village and out of curiosity entered some of the cottages with open doors. We found the huddled up, frozen bodies of children, women, and old people... there were only a few old men—those younger ones had all been deported..."

"Our political instructor explained to us, 'They were all *kulaks*' families, and everything had been expropriated from them. In the spring the government will organize many *kolkhoz* units in these places by settling the landless poor peasants from the other regions. Because, you know, 'collectivization has to be done at any cost.'"

"It is the truth, Orest Mikhailovich, the reality of today's life! One has to see it with one's own eyes to believe it! It's terrifying! At night I cannot sleep now; I have nightmares..."

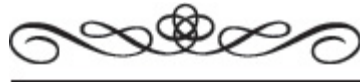
For a long time Maslyeyev recounted me his terrible and true story; listening to it gave me the shivers. I was sitting there crushed by the seemingly almost incoherent story of my former student, member of the Communist Party, who had indulged in such confidence in his semi-inebriated state. I did not offer him more vodka as he had a long way home and needed to sober up.

"You are asking how I am doing in the Institute of Mining Science," he told me bitterly. "Even the military science they taught us was useless! As you can see, they sent us to make war against the dead! Thank God, two weeks of vacation are ahead. I will rest a little and maybe will be able to forget..." He did not finish the sentence and added, "They told us that in the second semester we will start the real studies."

Suddenly Maslyeyev looked at his watch, got up from his chair, and said, "I'd better hurry up—I have to walk very fast to reach my home before it gets dark." And in saluting me he suggested, "And you, Orest Mikhailovich, don't wait too long. As soon as you can find a position far away from here, don't let it slip from you—move away from here. You are right, anything could

happen at any time—it is foolish to sit here and wait until it happens!”

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1. See the chapter “The Extraordinary Meeting.”
 2. See the chapter “Hamlet Kisyelyevka.”
 3. See the chapter “The Extraordinary Meeting.”
 4. Party organizer.
 5. *Profcom*—acronym for *Professional Committee of the Teachers’ Professional Union*.
 6. *Rabochy cooperative*—Workers’ Cooperative, a misnomer, because it was, like everything else in the Soviet Union, owned by the state.
 7. See the chapter “Digging into My Father’s Past.”
 8. *Raypartcom*—acronym for *Rayonny Partiyny Komitet*—The Regional Party Committee.



Knopsyk

By Olga Gladky Verro

When my mother and I returned to the hamlet of Kisyelyevka from our summer vacation at Kurort Slavyansk,¹ my father had a surprise for me. It was a small female dog, black with large white spots. Her name was Knopka—in Russian it means a “press-button”—because she had a round, shiny, black nose on the point of a white muzzle. Someone who was moving from the hamlet had asked my father if he wanted to take her. My father liked her right away and made a place for her to sleep on the floor of a small “to-be-built-later toilet room” in our new apartment.

Knopka was a very gentle and good-natured pet, and we all enjoyed having her. But very soon we discovered that Knopka’s belly was becoming larger and larger, and one day when my mother and I returned from school, we found her in labor. My mother assisted with words of encouragement as Knopka presented us with a gift of three squeaking puppies. She busied herself licking them and, after cleaning herself, offered them her nipples, to which the puppies attached themselves immediately.

But Knopka was not able to raise her litter because she became ill; probably, it was an internal infection. She didn’t want to eat anything and was only drinking water or milk. We had to bottle-feed the puppies to keep them from crying and dying. One morning Knopka asked to be let outside as usual and didn’t return. We were able to place two puppies with somebody in the hamlet, and the third one, who was an exact copy of Knopka, we kept for ourselves. We decided to name him after his mother, changing the name to the masculine, Knops. And, because he was so little, we called him by the diminutive name, Knopsyk.

Knopsyk had a black, smooth, shiny coat and a fluffy tail which curled up like a bagel, and a white necktie that descended on his chest, and he could almost talk with his intelligent black eyes. We all loved him very much, and he paid us back with his canine love and devotion. He knew us perfectly and understood

our every word, but he could understand us also without words. He guessed with his canine senses our moods and tried to stay in the shadows when we needed to be left alone. Very often in difficult moments of our life, he made us forget the reality by entertaining us with his unusually bright personality and quick-wittedness.

As Knopsyk was growing up, my father and I taught him all kinds of tricks, jumping, sitting still, lying down, and playing hide and seek with me. What fun we had when we taught him to find me, and Knopsyk would run all around the apartment looking for me. He learned quickly all the hiding places, and it took him only a few seconds to find me and then to run to my father and wait for a piece of candy as a reward.

Well, one evening my father decided to hide me on their bed under the blanket. Knops ran to look in all the places that he knew and then stopped near the bed, not sure what to do because he knew he was not allowed there. He started to bark and run back and forth, looking up, and finally decided to jump on the bed and pull the blanket with his paws and teeth until he uncovered me. My father and I had such fun, but my mother was not amused to have to make the bed all over again.

That winter Knopsyk became a member of our family. I was responsible for keeping him clean and free from fleas. To do this I was giving him a bath once a week in the small basin in the kitchen, combing out the fleas and, after drying him with his towel, keeping him in front of the open, warm oven until he was completely dry. My mother was in charge of feeding him, and my father indulged him with candies, although only as a reward for learning or repeating tricks.

Knopsyk was very alert, and he was able to recognize not only our steps but also of those few visitors who came to our apartment. He was able to detect when one of us was just starting on the ground floor to climb up the three flights of stairs. He showed it by becoming all excited as he waited impatiently near the door, jumping and wagging his tail. Watching him, we knew that papa, or mama, or I was coming up, or even one of father's friends.

But we never could figure out how he could recognize the steps of one of my father's students, whom I knew only by her first name, Maria. Every time, she was climbing the stairs,

Knopsyk would start to bark angrily and jump at the door. We had to close him in his place, because he would not stop barking until she was gone. And all the time she was in our apartment, he growled behind the closed door. "That dog is never so upset by anybody else," concluded my mother and warned my father, "This woman is coming with evil intentions, and Knopsyk is detecting it with his animal instinct."

I remember my father and mother discussing what they knew about Maria, whose last name, as I found out, was Morozova. They knew that she was of humble peasant origins and that she came to work on the mine, where a young woman of her stout build was able to do any work that a man could do. Here she became an active member of the Bolshevik Party and enrolled at the Rabfak, hoping that education would help her to advance her career and status in the party. As my father found out, at the Rabfak she was promoted year after year only because of her party membership and not for honestly earned grades.

This tactic didn't work with my father, who expected his students to learn and to receive their grades according to their achievements. She just couldn't learn and complete her home assignments in chemistry for lack of a basic educational background. But most detestable was that she actually expected my father to do all the work and let her copy it. He told her several times that she should come for help during the tutoring hours at the Rabfak, but she continued to ignore it and came to our apartment, rather than seek his help with the other students present in the classroom. Of course, this made my father very nervous and angry, especially when she adopted a more aggressive approach by making hints that she had comrades at the Rabfak in the nearby hamlet of Snyezhnoye and that she'd heard from them about some strange meeting that had happened there regarding a former member of the White Army. It was a pure and simple tactic of scaring him with blackmail.

After this revelation my mother argued with my father, telling him to stop being stubborn by clinging to his principle of giving the students only the grades they deserved. "You know very well that all teachers give her passing grades because she is a party member. Why do you want to ask for trouble?" she insisted. I think that in the end my father gave her a passing grade just to keep peace in our family. No wonder that Knopsyk barked so

much at Maria. He indeed felt that she had bad intentions in her mind when she came to see my father.

I remember one late afternoon in the spring, close to the final exams, Knops suddenly, for no reason at all, got furious, began to bark angrily, scratching the door, growling, jumping to the door handle, jumping back from the door only to jump back to it with such loud barking that we had to cover our ears. We all rushed to calm him down using all means, including admonishment, but to no avail—nothing worked. Instead in a few minutes his barking increased in intensity, and my father had to take him in his arms and squeeze his muzzle with his hand because someone was knocking on the door. My mother opened the door. There stood Maria Morozova...

Maria Morozova! Now it became clear to us why our Knops was enraged. We knew that he couldn't be mistaken. Of course, we invited her to sit down on our improvised couch, waiting with anxiety to hear what she had to say.

"Why are you keeping this little angry dog? I would have shot him long ago with my own hands! You know, when I was working for the Rostov-on-Don *CheKa*,² once I had shot a similar dog, together with his owner, a White officer. It was probably in the year 1920–1921... Oh, how many White officers we executed at that time!" she announced, carried away with immense satisfaction.

Knops was sitting on my father's lap with the squeezed muzzle and struggling to break loose and jump on Comrade Morozova, but since he couldn't, he was only whining and angrily glared at her.

Comrade Morozova! Oh, we still remember her: short and stout woman of about thirty-and-something, with gray discolored face and burning eyes. She represented a mixture of unusual hatred, boundless envy, and infinite evil, deeply hidden behind her foxy smile. However, it was hard to explain how her pudgy short hands could in cold blood shoot the White officers, bourgeois, and even innocent little dogs. How those hands sneaked up to the innocent throats or without trembling squeezed the trigger. And now, reminding us about those "innocent" accomplishments behind the walls of *CheKa*, she was preparing the ground toward influencing her grade on the final exam in chemistry. She knew very well that, in regard to grades, my father

didn't take into consideration anyone or anything, giving "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory" grades even to those belonging to "party-very-high-located" comrade-students.

"The exams will be soon..." she said almost casually.

"Yes," replied my father, "And after—a long-awaited vacation."

"And what topic you will give me?" She finally asked him a direct question.

"Why do you need to know the topic? You shouldn't be afraid—you have all 'satisfactory' grades in chemistry during the year. Is it possible for you to think that you may receive 'unsatisfactory' on the exams?"

"You know, I would have liked to receive higher than 'satisfactory.'"

"Regrettably, I couldn't tell you the topic because I don't know which one would come to you, as they are distributed by chance."

"But this could be arranged," she hinted at some kind of dishonest arrangement.

"No, Comrade Morozova, this I cannot arrange!"

All students knew my father's strictness and impartiality in regard to the grades and also knew that he couldn't be "merciful" to anyone under any circumstances—Morozova also knew this. But she probably hoped that her visit would scare him. However, she, obviously, decided that it was not enough to change his mind because she suddenly returned to her initial subject about the killings of the Rostov-on-Don CheKa. She concluded her visit with the words, "Well, you'd better kill your angry little dog!"

Of course, we couldn't even think about doing such a thing to our dear Knopsyk! But he himself was putting his life in danger every time he was performing his duty in guarding my mother.

Knopsyk loved to accompany my mother to the market and to the miners' cooperative. He would run a few steps ahead of her, making sure with his ringing yelping that the road was clear for her; then, happy to be of service to her, he would stop and wiggle his tail and wait for her. Then he would repeat it over and over again all the way to the place where she was going, and back home. He did this very zealously, as if he felt that he alone was responsible for my mother's safety. He did this task for the whole winter. By the time spring came he was not a puppy anymore, but he didn't lose any enthusiasm for his canine duty of protecting

my mother on the street.

The macadam road, which my mother had to cross right in front of our apartment building, was a straight road with a clear view in both directions. It was not a busy road—it was traveled mostly by carts pulled by horses. Only occasionally would an automobile belonging to the coal mine be seen on it.

One morning in the spring when I was on my way to school, my mother got ready to go to the miners' cooperative, and my father was getting ready to go to Rabfak. As always, Knopsyk was excited to go out to accompany my mother. She walked out of the front door of our apartment building and just got to the curb of the road, and stopped before crossing it, because she saw a small black automobile that was arriving very slowly on the other side of the road. Knopsyk, as usual, rushed with loud barking at this intruder and, because it was not stopping, he jumped over to bite the front tire and instantly was thrown in the air by the rotating wheel and landed in the middle of the road. It all happened so quickly that my mother was able only to scream a warning, "Knopsyk!" when he was already lying unconscious on the ground. My mother called him, "Knopsyk, Knopsyk!" and touched his immobile body, which did not respond to her voice or touch. She assumed he was dead. The automobile didn't even stop to see what had happened.

My mother ran back three flights of stairs to our apartment to call my father, who was getting dressed. In a hurry he put his shoes on, while my mother described to him how the accident had happened. Since my mother was sure that Knopsyk was dead, they didn't rush downstairs. When they opened the door, to their surprise, the wounded and barely breathing Knopsyk lay on the doormat to our apartment.

My father gently inspected the poor dog's body and as he tried to move him, Knopsyk emitted painful cries. Father decided not to lift the fatally wounded dog and instead pulled the whole doormat into the apartment and left it in the hall near the door. Only then did he see the thin stream of blood dripping from the dog's mouth.

"He is wounded internally," he said to my mother. Knopsyk was lying immobile, emitting faint whines and barely breathing. "I have to go and call on one of my students who has a gun," said my father.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed my mother, "Are you sure that nothing can be done to save him? You know Lyalya will be very heartbroken!"

"The best thing we can do now is stop the poor dog's suffering. We shall think later how to explain this to our daughter," concluded my father with determination. "You better go to the Rabfak and tell them that I will come as soon as I put this dog out of his misery."

When I returned home from school, I found it very strange that Knopsyk was not home. "Where is Knopsyk?" I asked my mother.

Reluctantly she told me about the accident. "He was clearing the road for me," she said. "And he had the instinct to climb all the way up the stairs to come home."

"What happened then?" I insisted. "Where is he now?"

"Papa had to call his student to kill him."

"Why did he have to kill him?" I screamed and burst into tears. I cried the whole afternoon lying on my bed. When my father returned home, he came to console me and to explain that Knopsyk would have died anyway after maybe several days of suffering, and that it was not right to prolong his ordeal. But I didn't want to even look at my father and to hear what he was saying. I just screamed at him, "Go way! Go away! You killed him! Go away!" I was so upset with my father for what he had done that I didn't talk to him for several days.

Until this incident happened, my father was for me a great authority. I always looked up to him and thought he knew everything and did everything right. This was the first time I definitely disagreed with his decision and his action and could not forgive him for a long time for killing my dear Knopsyk. I think that this was my first disappointment with my father and my first awareness that he could sometimes be wrong and not always right. From that day on, my blind trust in my father changed to a more cautious believing in his opinions, and I began to evaluate the rightfulness of some of his beliefs and actions.

But all three of us grieved for a long time for our dear little Knopsyk, and he remains in our memory forever.

1. See the chapter “The Extraordinary Meeting.”
2. CheKa—acronym for Chresvychaynaya Kommissiya—Extraordinary Commission that acted as a secret police against counter-revolutionaries from 1917 to 1921 in the Soviet Union.



My First Friendship

By Olga Gladky Verro

By the time we moved to the hamlet of Kisyelyevka¹, I was nine-and-a-half years old and was attending the fourth grade in elementary school. Until that time I had a group of friends without any special attachment to anyone in particular. Kisyelyevka was a big hamlet with multistory apartment buildings and no place for meeting other children to play outside like we could do in Snyezhnoye. Here the parents who cared for the welfare of their sons and daughters did not allow their children to gather in the staircases of the buildings or in the courtyards. Most of the small children were kept in the apartments, and the school age children were allowed to walk to and from school and after were also kept inside.



Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky) with her first girlfriend, Tamara. Hamlet Kisyelyevka, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1934. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.

I had become older and needed a closer relationship with girls my age. Next door to us on the same floor lived a girl, Tamara, and we became very close friends.

Tamara was only one year older than I, but she was taller and more physically developed. She had beautiful blond hair, divided on the left side of her head, and she plaited it in two thick braids. Her fair complexion and rosy cheeks added to her fresh and healthy look and were complemented by her large blue eyes.

She lived with her father, mother, her sister and her husband,

and their baby son. Although they all worked, they arranged their schedules at different shifts, and there was always one adult at home during the day and evening. Her father was an accountant at the mine office, and her mother worked in the miners' cooperative; her sister and her husband worked somewhere else for the mine. Tamara and I did a lot of baby-sitting for her nephew when her sister and mother were away from home.

I remember that I admired their apartment because compared to ours, which had very limited furniture and decorative items, theirs was very attractively furnished with very good quality furniture. The windows had nice white lace curtains. It looked very cozy, adorned with tall, leafy green houseplants placed on the floor near the windows and lots of bright red geraniums on the windowsills and on the plant stands. They also had several aloe vera cactuses, and they used their leaves to heal all kinds of wounds and infections from splinters, which were very common when one handled wood to start the fire in the stoves.

They also had a large semitransparent aquatic plant that resembled a jellyfish, and it lived in a large glass barrel filled with water. It was placed near the window so it could get as much sun as possible and fed regularly with sugar. This plant grew very slowly. And it was propagated by taking a small portion of the plant, which had also to include a piece of the dense and cloudy central section, which was called "mother," and placing it in another transparent container with sugared water. The plant secreted a sour substance in the water, making a pleasant drink that the whole family enjoyed, and they usually treated their guests by serving it in small glasses. I liked it, too, and Tamara served it to me in the evening when I stayed in their home.

Tamara and I walked together every day to our school, which was about fifteen to twenty minutes by foot from our apartment building. The new school was a large brick building built at some distance from the apartment complex, and between them was an empty piece of land covered with tall weeds. This land had been left for the construction of more apartment buildings in anticipation of further hamlet development. There was also a space left for the sidewalk, which was not done yet. Between the macadam road and a sidewalk-to-be, a space had been left for planting trees. Running along the sidewalk-to-be, all the way from the hamlet buildings to the school, there was a recently dug

deep and wide trench for the sewer or water pipes. Uneven and bumpy mounds of fresh earth had been left on both edges of the trench; along it, like a long, fat snake squashing the weeds, were huge clay pipes waiting the whole fall and winter to be placed in the trench.

Every day children from the hamlet walked to and from school on the narrow path beaten down by many small feet along this ditch between the mounds of earth and the sewer pipes. Children brought fresh dirt sticking to their shoes into the halls of the school and onto the staircases of their apartment buildings. Before entering the apartment, we had to remove our shoes and galoshes on the landing and allow them to dry beside the door before cleaning the dirt from them, especially during and after the rain. I always hated to clean my shoes and polish them with shoe polish, a task on which my father insisted, notwithstanding my reasonable protests: "It is all a waste of time to shine them—tomorrow they will be dirty again."

Tamara and I walked together to school in the morning and returned together to the hamlet in the afternoon. The rambunctious boys—after sitting several hours at the desks in school—on their way home played pranks, pushing each other, running, and teasing the girls, pulling their braids, and calling them bad names. We also had our share of boys who targeted us for their pranks and teasing. They called me names—although my facial paralysis had improved a lot—but it was still visible when I smiled. I tried to use my time-tested tactic of ignoring the malicious boys, but they were not content with my silence and would start to push me into a ditch. When I complained to my father that the technique he taught me was not working, he told me, "If they are the same size as you, show them that you can defend yourself, and fight them back."

My mother was not very happy with my father's suggestion; she was afraid that the boys could push me down into that deep ditch. And she began to come to meet us halfway from home, although I reassured her that the defense was working and that the boys had stopped bothering me.

But with Tamara things were different; she was afraid of the boys, who felt that they could pull her braids and get away with it. Well, one day when one boy was really nasty to Tamara, would not let go of her braids, and she was screaming, I just couldn't

resist my impulse to come to the rescue of my friend, and I got into a fight with the boy. I was almost winning when his friend came to help him and, between the two of them, they pushed me in the ditch. My mother was not far away; she saw all that had happened and rushed to help me. Together with Tamara, she pulled me out of the ditch. Meanwhile the boys, anticipating trouble after being recognized, ran away as fast as they could.

My mother expected that the boys would seek revenge, and she came to meet us for the next several days. The boys got used to seeing my mother every day and, for a while, they kept away from us, finding other victims for their teasing. But when my mother stopped coming, they began to torment Tamara again. She got tired of it and decided to cut her hair² short, hoping that the boys would be less tempted to pull her hair.

In the evenings, when my father had a chemistry laboratory class at the Rabfak, he took me with him to stay there and allowed me to help him prepare the ingredients and implements for the experiments and demonstrations. I would help him bring it into the classroom, and he allowed me to stay there to watch it. Afterward he gave the lecture part of the lesson, and I would go and sit in the laboratory and work on my homework or read books. During those evenings I learned many chemical principles, names of the elements, and the Mendeleev's Periodic Table, and also learned to handle test tubes and other laboratory implements.

On those evenings when both my father and mother had lectures, I stayed with Tamara most of the time, either in their apartment or ours, and we were not afraid, because there was always some adult person from her family at home. Sometimes I was invited to stay with a Jewish girl whose parents were also teaching at the Rabfak. But then, my father had to come at night to another building across the muddy courtyard to take me home; this was very inconvenient, especially during bad weather.

My friendship with Tamara grew stronger day by day. We always found something interesting to do together, doing our homework and helping each other in solving math problems or in writing compositions. Sometimes we crocheted, or drew pictures, or read, or just had a girls' talk, sharing our opinions about teachers and other girls in our school. Tamara also taught me to play a popular card game called V-Duraka.³ My father strongly disapproved of my playing cards, which he associated with

gambling and considered a waste of time. Therefore, I tried not to engage in this activity. But Tamara liked it very much, and when we played it occasionally, I would not tell my father, because I was afraid that he would not allow me to stay with Tamara in the evening.

I remember that one of our cherished pastimes was to look at the pictures in the albums that Tamara's parents allowed us to have only once in a while, because they were kept out of circulation. They had several albums with old, pre-revolutionary, multicolored greeting cards, which were considered to be precious collectible items. There were such a variety of them that I was wondering about the messages, meaning, and the reasons why they would send them to relatives and friends, and Tamara's mother explained it to me.

Especially puzzling to me were the cards with the pictures of icons with sad-looking faces surrounded with golden crowns and clothing, the cards with the winged angels flying in the rosy-blue sky, those with pictures of colored and decorated Easter eggs in baskets placed on the table near tall *paskha* cakes and long willow branches with just-opened silver-white, oval, plush-like flowers; and those depicting Christmas trees covered with an unbelievable variety of toys and shiny flakes of snow. At that time, the Soviet government had abolished the tradition of having Christmas trees, and an extensive campaign was going on in children's books and journals against cutting down the "poor young trees" in the forest.

The only Christmas tree that I remember having was the one my father made for me when we lived in the village of Nizhnyaya Krynka. I remember helping my father to make toys and a chain from colored construction paper and decorating the tree with old wax toys and shiny balls that he'd inherited from his family, since he was the only one who had a child at that time. Since then, I'd cherished those fragile toys and wrapped them carefully in tissue paper in a large old cardboard box. Occasionally I would open the box, and Tamara and I would play with them, admiring the delicate workmanship.

Since that first and last Christmas tree, when I was only four years old, I don't remember if my parents ever explained the meaning of the Christmas holiday to me. Tamara's mother did her best in telling us about the holy night and the birth of Jesus, but it

was too mystical and not clear to me and reminded me of some fables that I had read in abundance.

When I asked my mother to explain to me more about Christmas, she told me that it was an old and beautiful traditional religious holiday, which the Soviet regime had abolished. Therefore, as a teacher, she was prohibited from talking about religion; that if somebody were to find out that she was teaching her daughter about Christian holidays, it would be considered religious propaganda, and she could lose her school employment. "However," she said, "your grandfather is a very religious man, and he can explain it to you when we are there next time during the summer vacation."

In addition to the religious kinds of greeting cards, Tamara's albums also had many birthday, wedding, and mundane-occasion cards; I admired the pictures of unbelievably colorful flowers and the children beautifully dressed in fashionable clothing, playing with each other or with their pets; I liked especially the cards with the pictures of the elegant ladies with or without parasols, wearing fancy gowns and large hats decorated either with the plumes of exotic birds, or with delicate flowers, or even with fruits.

The shiny photographs and pictures that were printed in relief mesmerized me. It was the first time in my life that I'd seen such extraordinary pictures for those times. I could sit and look at them over and over again. The albums were held in great regard as family heirlooms, and we were allowed to look at them only when some adult was home. We were instructed not to touch the surface of the cards with our hands and to turn the pages of the album carefully with the tips of our fingers at the corners of the cardboard pages. And, of course, we had to wash our hands before even asking to look at that marvel of a decadent world of not-so-long-ago, when our parents could buy, send, or receive them for birthdays and religious holidays. There was nothing of that kind that could be found to buy anywhere in our Soviet times.

Before the school year was over, Tamara's family suddenly decided to move to another place. It must have been some very important reason that made the whole family move from a place where they all had jobs and a decent apartment to live in. I remember my father commenting about it, "Probably her father or

grandfather was one of the 'has been' and was close to being exposed."

"Papa—what does 'has been' mean?" I asked. "And by whom would he be exposed?"

"It's a long story," replied my father. "It means that he was one of those who before the revolution had been somebody whom the Soviets don't like, and they chase them and expose them as so-called 'enemies of the people.'"

"Stop it, Orest, stop it!" intervened my mother. "The girl is too young to understand such explanations and may blurt it out to somebody and get you in trouble!"

"Don't you worry, Mama," I calmed her with self-assurance. "I am not a little girl anymore. I understand that Tamara's father is a good man, but the Soviets don't like him. I am not going to tell this to anybody. I am not so stupid as to get him in trouble."

Tamara's family shipped their furniture by rail, but they didn't know if they would find an apartment right away in the new place and were not sure where they were going to stay. They were afraid to take with them some small but precious items and asked my mother if they could leave them for safekeeping with us for a few days. Among the items they left with us were a briefcase with some documents, a jewelry box, several albums with family photographs, and those with the heirloom greeting cards that I admired so much. I asked Tamara's mother if I could look at those beautiful cards one last time and promised to wash my hands and be very careful with them. She smiled and nodded her head in a sign of permission, while she was thanking my mother for taking responsibility for these precious possessions.

That night their whole family slept in their empty apartment on the floor, and Tamara slept with me in my bed. We talked late into the night, promising each other to write and keep in touch for the rest of our lives. Early in the morning we embraced each other and, with tears in our eyes, said goodbye, sealing our parting with the words, "Remember to write to me."

For several evenings I did nothing but admire the beautiful cards that represented for me the highest examples of art that I had seen in my life. I even dared to stroke very lightly the embossed shapes and wondered how they were done. Then I began to imagine what I would do with the cards if they were mine. "Maybe not all," I thought. "Maybe just a few of them..."

Then I began to look through the albums again, selecting those cards that I would choose if I were allowed to keep them.

Then I decided to choose only one card, which I would keep, if they would allow me to keep it as a gift for their safekeeping. And I dared to pull it out of the album. I placed the album on the box containing the other items and put the selected card on top of it. Because the album was not lying level in the box, the card slowly slipped to the floor. As my eyes followed the falling card, a thought flashed through my mind: "If I just leave it there on the floor, maybe when they come to take their box, nobody will pay attention to it, and it will remain here for me... Then I could 'find it' after they were gone..." I left the card on the floor all night and the day after when I went to school.

When I returned from school, I checked in the room to see if anyone had picked up the box. Everything was there as I'd left it. I opened the album to the page where I had removed the card and saw an empty space, looking at me like a witness accusing me of having done something that my father would not approve of. And I remembered the incident with my toy iron in Snyezhnoye,⁴ when my father ordered me to take that iron back to the boy it belonged to. "Papa would definitely question how I got that card when he sees it," I thought. "Or even worse, Tamara's mother could write to my mother that they are missing one card when they see that empty space in the album." The temptation to keep that card was very strong, but the consequences were bothering my developing conscience, and finally the "right" won over the "wrong." I picked up the card from the floor, admired it for the last time, and slowly inserted it back into its place in the album.

Soon after, when I was in school, Tamara's brother-in-law came to retrieve the box with their possessions. My mother told my father that he was right about Tamara's father—he had to leave Kiselyevka in a hurry because "they"⁵ were after him. When she asked the young man their new address, he told her, "For your sake and for our peace of mind, it is best that you don't know it."

I never received any letter from Tamara and was greatly disappointed in what I thought was a friendship for life. When I complained to my mother about it, she only told me, "She cannot write to you because the whereabouts of her father could be traced through her letters. Do you understand?"

“Yes, Mama,” I answered, but I was unconvinced by her explanation. “If she really wanted to mail me a letter,” I said, “she could have found a way.”

My mother replied, “My dear girl, you have yet to learn a lot about what could and what couldn’t be done, even if one wanted to do it very much.”

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1. See the chapters “Sharing the Apartment” and “Hamlet Kisyelyevka.”
 2. From photograph of Tamara and Olga Gladky in 1933–1934. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.
 3. The Game of a Fool.
 4. See the chapter “My Childhood in Snyezhnoye.”
 5. The agents of KGB—acronym for *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Byesopastnosti*—a Committee of State Security.



Kotyk and Volodya Are Growing up

*As Remembered by Vladymyr N. Berezhnoy, Nikolay
N. Berezhnoy, and Antonina G. Gladky*

After the civil war was over,¹ Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy² worked as an architect at the Slavyansk Town Soviet in the town's communal property office. His work included maintenance of the town's buildings and rental housing of the properties that had been seized from the owners by the government. He felt that it was time for him to move to real construction work. He applied and was hired by the Department of Industrial Development of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as a building engineer to work on the construction projects of the state's industrial sites.

It was at the beginning of the industrialization period going on in the whole Soviet Union, and people and resources were mobilized as they'd been in wartime for this enormous enterprise. For this kind of work, Nikolay Gavriylovich was well paid, but on the other hand, there were some inconveniences that he had to accept. Once a project was finished on one site, he was transferred to a new place where a new factory had to be constructed. It involved constantly moving the family from one town to another, not allowing them to put down roots in any one place.

The first appointment for Nikolay Gavriylovich was in the town of Taganrog during the period of NEP.³ In that period life was somewhat easier, since food was back on the market, and the Soviet authorities did not persecute small entrepreneurs.

When Nikolay Gavriylovich arrived in Taganrog, as a building engineer, he was treated better than the simple workers, who usually lived with their families in quickly built wooden barracks. Instead, he received a single house, where his family could live comfortably. His work was challenging and proceeded for a while very well, without any problems. He began to have a brighter outlook on the stability of his position in the Department of the

Industrial Development of Ukrainian S.S.R.⁴ But Nikolay always had on his mind that he had previously worked in that town with a well-known architectural company and was fearful that he'd encounter someone who'd known him before. In those days nobody was sure about what could happen to him tomorrow even if one was politically clean as a whistle.

Therefore, for him what happened one night in Taganrog was not completely unexpected. But for his wife and young sons, it was a frightening episode that they never forgot. Indeed, it impressed the boys so much they remembered what happened that night very well with all the details.

At about two o'clock in the morning, several men dressed in GPU uniforms with an officer in charge burst into their home and started to search everywhere, throwing everything on the floor. Somehow, without being seen by them, Katya was able to throw a small bundle with her gold jewelry out the window and save it from being seized. Nikolay Gavriylovich was arrested and was taken away by the GPU agents.

There was a public trial; his wife Katya and both sons came to the court to hear it. The prosecutor accused Nikolay Gavriylovich of negligence on the job. For some reason, as he was working on the additions to the buildings of the glass factory, he was considered to be responsible for a collision of two freight cars full of glass that was all broken into small pieces. The trial was very short, and only a few witnesses were produced. They testified that he was guilty of some kind of undefined negligence, and Nikolay Gavriylovich was not even allowed to defend himself. Then the judge pronounced the verdict: "Guilty." And after that he pronounced the sentence: "Two years in prison."

His wife, Katya, and especially his sons, Kotyk and Volodya, were terrified watching as the guards in GPU uniforms escorted their father as if he were a hard-core criminal to the prison, with their weapons pointed at him and ready to be used in case he dared to run from them on the street.

A strange thing happened, though; Nikolay Gavriylovich was kept in the town prison instead of being transferred to another center of detention, as was customary for other prisoners after a trial. While serving his term in prison, he was assigned to the project of rebuilding portions of the town prison. It was very suspicious, because it required just the time to finish it in those

two years. Later, it came out that he was not guilty of what he'd been accused of, and one could only presume that he'd been framed by the GPU and that his whole trial had been staged because they needed a free building engineer to work on their prison additions—and they found an easy way to get one.

However, for his wife, Katya, it was a very difficult time, as she had to provide for herself and her two sons. When she was faced with this problem, she remembered that when she was young and helped in her father's inn, they prepared meals for a large number of people—there was always enough food left for the whole family to eat. She thought, "If I cook for several people, there would be enough food left for my two sons and me to eat." She decided to put her know-how and previous experience of cooking for a large number of people into practice.

She knew well several colleagues of her husband, technicians and engineers, who didn't have their families with them. She remembered that some of them had expressed their envy to her husband for being so lucky to have his wife with him—she prepared home-cooked meals, while they had to swallow that foul food in the factory cafeteria day after day. Well, right away she found the customers. When she offered to cook for them two meals a day, they all welcomed her invitation, since well-prepared home meals were definitely preferable to the sloppy factory cafeteria food and, in addition, she charged them less than it would cost them there. Of course, it helped that at that time the NEP policy was allowing small entrepreneurs and peasants to sell their products freely and food was available on the market.

Very early on Saturday mornings Katya went to the market with her two sons and bought all the necessary provisions for the whole week, loading it all on a wagon to be delivered to their home. That's how for two years Katya was able to provide food not only for herself and her children but was able also to bring home-made food regularly to her husband in prison.

Although Katya was always religious, her sons observed that after the arrest of their father, she became even more devoted to her prayers than before. She had a couple of icons, which she kept in a corner of the room. There she would light two candles and quietly whisper her prayers without bothering her sons. She did not impose on them, neither to pray, nor to learn the prayers, and she did not cultivate in them religious teachings. In those days,

when anti-religious propaganda by the Bolsheviks was in full bloom, children were not brought up with the religious spirit forced on them. It was a hope of many parents that their children would grow up respecting the religion just by observing their parents' devotion to God and by maintaining the religious traditions in the family.

It was at this time that Katya received from her aunt Varya the news about her own father. Katya's father, Iosif Iosifovich Grechko, after fleeing from his hometown of Slavyansk, was hiding for the rest of his life from the CheKa and GPU because, as the previous owner of several inns in town, he was on the list of the "enemies of the people." The local authorities never ceased to search and try to arrest him as a former rich *bourjouy*⁵, who in the eyes of the Bolsheviks was considered forever to be the enemy of the revolution and the Soviet government.

After several years of being incommunicado, her father found a way to let his daughter know where he was hiding. He lived somewhere in a small village of the Caucasus region. When Katya found out the address of her father, she went to visit him and show him his two grandsons. It was from her father that Katya found out that her only brother, who was in the White Army, had been able to embark at the last moment on a ship and now was living abroad, either in Belgium or France.

Katya's son Volodya remembered that his maternal grandfather, whom he had never seen before, was a large man of very pleasing manners and that he received them with a warm welcome. When it was time to return, he gave them a lot of grapes and watermelons, which they had to carry to the railroad station, load on the train, and then haul them all the way from the station to their home. But the effort was not lost; they had a supply to last for a long time.

When Nikolay Gavriylovich was released from the Taganrog prison, he was transferred to the city of Kharkov to work on the construction of a very large industrial complex, and the whole family moved there. They lived there for several years in an apartment building, like most people in that large city. While they were living in Kharkov, his sister Nyusya was attending Kharkovsky Medical Institute and stayed with his family for a short time.

Although both Kotyk and Volodya had started elementary

school in Taganrog, they had to change to the new school in Kharkov. Like all children in that school district, they had to attend the so-called Thirty-Seventh-Factory-and-Workshop School that provided seven years of general education and some vocational training. When they started the school, they were registered by the names of Nikolay and Vladimir, and from then on they were called by those names; only their family and relatives continued to call them by their nicknames of Kotyk and Volodya.

After graduation from the Seven-Year School, Kotyk, under the guidance of his father, enrolled in one of Kharkov's technical schools, but he couldn't continue to study there because his family had moved again, this time to the town of Maryupol. Nikolay Gavriylovich was transferred there as a building engineer to a large center of metallurgical works called Azovstal,⁶ where he worked on the construction of the new metallurgical plants that were built at full speed as a part of the planned industrialization of the country. In Maryupol, Volodya continued to attend the elementary school, and Kotyk had to transfer to a technical school similar to the one he'd attended in Kharkov. Kotyk graduated with specialization as a lathe operator, and in that capacity he began his working career in one of the Azovstal plants.

It was in Maryupol that Katya's father came to visit them. Kotyk and Volodya were impressed with the way their grandfather sat at the table, with an air of great importance, as if he wished to commemorate that occasion solemnly. He said to his daughter, "Well, Katya, pour me a drink!" She poured him, in a tall glass, 200 grams of vodka, which he drank all in one gulp.

Then he took a bite of a small hot red pepper that she placed in front of him, knowing that he liked to have it as a snack after vodka. The grandsons were surprised with their grandfather's strange taste. This was his only visit to his daughter and they have not seen him since then.

Instead, Nikolay Gavriylovich and Katya always maintained contact with his father, Gavriyl Danilovich, and with Katya's Aunt Varya and Uncle Misha. With their sons Kotyk and Volodya, they often returned to visit them in Slavyansk.

Since Nikolay Gavriylovich was a very good building engineer, many party members were pressuring him to become a member of the Communist-Bolshevik party. Nikolay stubbornly

resisted their persuasions by justifying himself with an important apology that his work was taking all his time and that he couldn't attend all meetings that were required of party members.

Volodya remembered one episode—clearly as if it just happened yesterday—when his father disregarded all the precautions of not taking risks in expressing his anti-communist feelings in the presence of his sons. That evening his father came home from work irritated and upset. He explained to Katya, “That damn secretary of the Bolshevik Party cell of our department worked on me all day again, trying to persuade me to become a member of the Communist Party. This time he was so insistent that I ran out of excuses for my negative answers.” Then he raised his voice, “Can you imagine? He was so impudent to tell me looking straight in my eyes that I could never have any promotions on the job unless I join the party!” And in an outburst of anger, his father shouted, “Let them kill me, but I will never become a Bolshevik!”

Indeed, by not becoming a Communist Party member, Nikolay was never promoted to any top positions in his field, and, as soon as the construction work in one place was completed, he was sent to another town. And it happened again—he was transferred from Maryupol to work for a short time in Artyemovsk. There his first disappointment happened with his older son Kotyk.

Nikolay Gavriylovich expected his sons to follow in his footsteps and select some technical field for their careers. From the time Kotyk and Volodya were young, he'd cultivated in them the aptitudes and skills needed in technical education. When they were older, he used to place in one of the rooms two drafting tables and patiently teach them technical drafting and, when they became more skillful, he encouraged them by paying them for copying his architectural drawings. He influenced even his younger brother Petya to study in the architectural technical school. But he failed to convince his older son to study further in the technical field.

From his childhood Kotyk had been keen on all kinds of sports; he liked the light athletics, skiing, and he loved all kinds of sports games, especially the game called gumball. In Artyemovsk Kotyk met several young men who studied physical culture in the local technical school. They invited him to their gymnastics and

athletic events and sports games.

As a result of his fascination with sports, he decided against the advice of his father and discontinued his studies in the technical field. He changed the direction of his career by enrolling in 1932 in the Artyemovsky Technicum of Physical Culture.⁷ There he studied only one year. During that first year he demonstrated excellent abilities in sports and earned good grades in other subjects. To his surprise, he received an offer of transfer to the Kharkov's Institute of Physical Culture of Ukraine. Of course, this was an unexpected opportunity, which he could not miss, and in the next school year, he started the first course with the major in physical education. It was an enormous blow to his father's ambition for his eldest son, and he was very upset with his son's choice.

From the short project in Artyemovsk Nikolay Gavriylovich was transferred to work in the town of Kherson, and the family moved again to a new place to live. Volodya attended school there and graduated in 1937 from a Ten-Year High School, which qualified him to enroll in any university or college. To the dismay of his father, Volodya followed in the footsteps of his older brother, and after graduation he went to Kharkov and also enrolled in the Kharkov Institute of Physical Culture of Ukraine.

Nikolay Gavriylovich was terribly upset after both of his sons chose to specialize in the physical education field, which he didn't consider a serious career. In the heat of the argument that happened when Volodya and his older brother Kotyk came on vacation from Kharkov, he asked them both with a touch of sarcasm in his voice, "What kind of a career is this 'physical culture'? Both of you have selected to become clowns! Yes, real clowns!"

Kotyky and Volodya could not convince their father that they liked physical activities and had very good skills in sports and gymnastics. They told him that at that time the Soviet government was placing a great emphasis on competitive sports and on physical education in schools, colleges, and youth camps; therefore, there were plenty of career opportunities in those fields. They couldn't understand their father's objections and arguments against their career choice. The verbal strife between father and sons was unpleasant and regrettable, and it left a bitter feeling in the family; at the end, both sides remained convinced that they

were right. Therefore, both Kotyk and Volodya pursued their education in their chosen field, and their father continued to detest their choice.

Disappointment in his sons aggravated Nikolay's drinking problem, which began after Katya discovered that he'd had an affair with a young woman with whom he worked. When Katya was in Slavyansk, she confided with her sister-in-law, Tonya, about it. She recounted in minute detail how she confronted on the sidewalk that "no-good wench," how she pushed and pushed her until that "bitch" bumped her back against the electric pole, and how she then grabbed her by the hair and banged her head against the wood. After this incident Katya and Nikolay had a big quarrel, and he swore to her that no such thing would ever happen again.

However, Katya complained that after this happened, Nikolay began to drink more than usual, but she hoped that with time he would get back to normal. However, after the confrontation with his sons about their choice of careers, Nikolay began to drink heavily. At the first opportunity Katya confronted and accused her sons by telling them straightforward, "Boys, it is all your fault, and you are responsible that your father started to drink heavily. It's you who made him become a drunkard!" But Kotyk and Volodya could never believe that it was their fault.

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1. Russian Civil War 1918–1922.
 2. See the chapter "Family of Nikolay Gavrilovich Berezhnoy."
 3. NEP—acronym for *Novaya Ekonomicheskaya Politika*—The New Economic Policy.
 4. Soviet Socialist Republic.
 5. Russian pronunciation of the word "bourgeois." A member of the bourgeoisie in Marxist doctrine was considered a capitalist, or a member of the anti-proletarian social class.
 6. Azov—the Sea of Azov; and *stal*—steel.
 7. Artyemovsk Technical School of Physical Education.



Return to My Hometown of Slavyansk

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

In the summer of 1934 during the school vacations, my daughter Lyalya and I, as usual, came to my hometown of Slavyansk. There, at the well-known health resort, Slavyansk Kurort, every summer she received applications of hot, salty mud from the Salty Lake, a therapy for her facial paralysis. I was taking relaxing baths with the warm, salty water from the lake, and both of us were resting in the afternoons in the pine forest on a hammock slung between the trunks of the old pine trees.

The improvement on Lyalya's face was proceeding very slowly. But the neurologist from Kharkov who came to the clinic at the Kurort advised us that she needed this therapy to keep the affected muscles and nerves on the left side of her face relaxed and to keep her mouth in its normal shape. The doctor also gave us hope that the therapy could be beneficial to improve her smile and especially laughing, which hadn't yet become symmetrical on both sides. He told us that the left eyebrow would remain immobile where the nerve remained paralyzed. But so far, the rest of her facial nerves and muscles on the left side were functional, and he hoped that they would slowly but steadily improve.

My husband remained in the hamlet of Kiselyevka where, after a short rest, he, as the Rabfak's assistant director for the curriculum, had to work with the secretary on the schedules for students and teachers for the school year 1934-1935. The situation of my husband during the second year of employment at the Rabfak had become worrisome. Too many Bolshevik Party members had contacts with the party members from the neighboring hamlet of Snyezhnoye.¹ They were becoming too curious about what happened to him when he worked there at the Rabfak and were not too subtle in asking some leading questions about his past.

It was a very tense year and, from being nervous and being on the alert all the time, my husband had developed strong stomach pains. When he came home, he had to lie down with a heating bottle on his stomach to calm the pain. He also had to maintain a very bland diet and, to lower the stomach acid, to take bicarbonate of soda. It was also becoming taxing on me and even on our daughter.

My husband finally came to the usual conclusion, "It's time to go!" And we decided to move farther from the coal-mining hamlets. We thought that the town of Slavyansk was as good as any other place to try if there were some opportunities for employment there. We reasoned that, because of a shortage of teachers in the country, one always could find teaching positions.

I went to the Slavyansk's Commissariat of People's Education, commonly called *Narobras*,² to inquire about a position for me in the school year 1934–1935. Indeed, there was an opening for a teacher of Russian language in the Ukrainian Pedagogical Technical School—commonly called Teachers Technicum—that prepared elementary school teachers for the Ukrainian schools.



Antonina (Tonya) Gavriylovna Gladkaya (Gladky) with daughter Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky) in the park of Slavyansk Kurort. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, Summer 1934–1935.

From the time a dual system of schools was introduced in the country as a means of suppression of nationalistic discontent in the Soviet republics, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic had established two types of schools. One type was called Ukrainian schools, where all subjects were taught in Ukrainian, and the study of the Russian language was required as an official language of the Soviet Union. The other type was called Russian schools, where all subjects were taught in Russian, with the required study of the Ukrainian language as an official language of the Ukrainian Republic. Therefore, after the introduction of the

so-called Ukrainization of education, many elementary school teachers who knew both languages and could teach in Ukrainian were needed. So, I had no difficulty in finding employment.



Antonina (Tonya) Gavriyllovna Gladkaya (Gladky) with daughter Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky) in the park of Slavyansk Kurort. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, Summer 1934–1935.

I was appointed for the school year 1934–1935 to teach the required Russian language at the Ukrainian Teachers Technicum. It was located up the hill beyond the cemetery on Kharkovsky Street, which was now renamed Shevchenko³ Street.

Not far from the Teachers Technicum, on Shevchenko Street, was a large property expropriated by the Soviets after the revolution from one rich family, which now housed Technicum

students and teachers. The Technicum students' dormitory was a long, white one-story building, probably a former inn, with a large courtyard in the back of it. Next to the dormitory building was a big old brick house that was subdivided into many one- and two-room apartments for the teachers. A tall wooden fence surrounded the buildings, the courtyard, and the garden. Next to the dormitory there was a gate leading to the courtyard and to the entrances to both buildings. Far in the back of each of the buildings were two separate wooden outhouses.

On the back part of the teachers' apartment building, almost the whole length of it, was a large enclosed porch with big windows and an entrance door leading to all the apartments, except one at the end of it that had a separate entrance with high brick steps.

This separate apartment was assigned to me. I liked it right away because it had privacy and enough space. Upon entering the apartment, there was a kitchen with a brick stove built into the wall, dividing it from the very large room and providing heat in the winter. In the back of the apartment house was a large fruit garden with old, tall apple and pear trees and a nice yard for my daughter to play in.

As soon as I received the apartment, I sent a telegram to my husband: "I am employed. Received the apartment. Ship by rail everything to Slavyansk." I was hoping that once he was here it would be as easy for him to find a teaching position as it had been for me. After all, we already had a place to live, and my salary was sufficient to start in the new place. To our surprise, that year there were no openings for teachers of biology, chemistry, or science in the Teachers Technicum or in any of the other schools in town; Orest remained unemployed the entire school year.

Having so much free time, he studied intensively for the correspondence courses of the Moscow Pedagogical Institute, in which both of us had been enrolled for three years. During the school vacation in the summer of 1935, we had to take our final examinations before graduation.



Orest Mikhailovich Gladky. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, Summer 1935. Photo by Olga Gladky

He also dedicated himself to his hobby of photography that he'd begun in Snyezhnoye. He divided with black drapes one corner in the kitchen, which had no windows, and made a dark room for developing negatives and for printing pictures. In the large room he hung on the wall a black cloth as a background and in front of it placed a permanently standing tripod with the photographic camera with the exact focus to take pictures; on one side he placed a big reflector lamp for proper illumination. We never had so many photos taken as my husband did in that year.

It was an expensive hobby, but he was also teaching Lyalya all the procedures and developing her hobby. He constantly needed fresh chemicals, developer and fixing agent, new glass negatives, and various kinds of photographic papers for printing photographs and, of course, here and there some new gadget or equipment for enlargements. He didn't feel too concerned about spending money for this hobby, because he was not taking it from my salary but from the small amount of savings that we had accumulated when both of us worked. I felt that it was good learning for my daughter and didn't object to my husband's hobby. At that time, we also got a small kitten that quickly grew up to be a nice blue-gray cat, Murka, whom my husband trained to do some tricks.



In the park of Slavyansk Kurort. From left: Vera Mikhailovna Gladkaya; Antonina (Tonya) Gavriylovna Gladkaya (Gladky); Ekaterina (Katya) Fyedorovna Grudzinskaya (Tonya's first cousin); Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky). Slavyansk Kurort, Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1936.

However, my husband was helping me a lot in correcting the students' papers that I was bringing home every day from each class, because one of the major teaching tools in learning to write in Russian was dictation. The next day I used to go over the misspelled words and used those examples to teach the

grammatical rules to my students.



Antonina Gavriyllovna Gladkaya (Gladky) with Cat Murka. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1935. Photo Orest M. Gladky

Since the Teachers Technicum had a very large enrollment, the school day was divided in two shifts, and I had to work from eight o'clock in the morning to noon teaching four classes; then I had two hours to go home, cook the meal, and have lunch. Then I had to go back to work in the afternoon from two to six o'clock, teaching the other four classes. Considering that there was an average of twenty-five students in each class, I had to correct two hundred students' dictation papers every day! I could never have done it by myself. Therefore, besides my husband, my daughter—who had already good experience correcting dictation papers of

my Rabfak students in Kisyelyevka—was also helping me with this task in the evening after finishing her assignments from school. Sometimes my youngest brother, Petya, also helped me with this task. We always stayed up late into the night correcting those papers that I needed for the next day.

And, as it was obvious, I needed a lot of help, because besides teaching and correcting papers, I had to do many other chores. Early in the morning before going to work, I had to run to the market in the center of town to buy fresh produce and milk. Orest couldn't adapt himself to do shopping in the market, although he went to buy bread and other foods in the cooperative and in the only delicatessen in town.

He also didn't feel comfortable and never tried to learn cooking meals and was only helping me. He cleaned the various grains by picking out stones, loose bran, and odd seeds. He also started the fire in the stove and kept a pot ready with boiling water. I had to cook either in the morning before going to work and leave him to watch it, or between the morning and afternoon shifts of teaching, when I had only two hours to cook lunch and dinner and to eat.

In the teachers' apartment house also lived the Technicum's assistant director of curriculum. He was an inveterate Ukrainian nationalist who hated Russians, but he was very careful not to express his hatred openly, because the extreme Ukrainian nationalists were considered to be the enemies of the Bolsheviks. Therefore, he constantly reproached the teachers who spoke Russian in the teachers' room, always reminding them that this was the Ukrainian Technicum and they were expected to communicate in Ukrainian. But most of the teachers preferred to speak Russian because most of them were educated in that language, and most of the intelligentsia spoke Russian at home and everywhere else, except in the classroom. And since I was teaching Russian, I also spoke Russian with the other teachers in the teachers' room, and they most likely answered in the same language. Of course, the assistant director didn't like this and from the start showed his contempt for me.

During that year I applied to the *Narobras* for accommodations in a sanatorium—a health resort facility—for my daughter and received one-month free room and board for her in the resort town of Yevpatoria in Crimea during the summer of 1935 school

vacation. My husband accompanied her there.

Upon his return, both of us had to depart to Moscow. It was our fourth and last year of studies at the correspondence courses. At the end of the summer session, we had to take our final examinations and graduate from the Moscow Pedagogical Institute.

Before he returned from Crimea, we received from the institute instructions on what we had to present to the examination commission in order to be admitted to the final exams. They required that each student present their detailed autobiography, documents issued by the Town Soviet about the student's right to vote, and the documents from the last place of the residence of their parents stating the father's social status; the male students also had to present their military card.

Since my husband could not request any documents from Nikitovka because he was registered there as a *lishenyets*, he decided not to apply for the final exams. He reasoned that, with the shortage of teachers, his documents about the four years of successful studies at the Moscow Pedagogical Institute would be almost equivalent to having a diploma and he could always say, "I shall finish my final exams next year." Therefore, I departed for Moscow alone.⁴

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1. See the chapters "Hamlet Kiselyevka," and "The Extraordinary Meeting."
 2. Narobras—acronym for *Kommissariat Narodnogo Obrasovaniya*—Commissariat of People's Education.
 3. Taras Shevchenko—Ukrainian poet.
 4. See the chapter "The Keynote Speaker at the Teachers' Conference."



My Pre-teen Years in Slavyansk

By Olga Gladky Verro

During the school summer vacation¹ in 1934, my mother and I went to Slavyansk Kurort,² as we did every summer. Before we left for our vacation I detected from my parents' conversations that they were worrying about my father's next school-year employment at the Rabfak in the hamlet of Kisyelyevka.³ My mother had mentioned that she would try to find herself a teaching position in Slavyansk. She believed that, since the Russian language was a required subject, there could be some openings to teach it in the town, which had many schools. She told my father, "If I find employment for myself, you could look for a position later when you join us there."

I was not very surprised that my parents were planning to move again; I was becoming used to this nomadic way of life when we stayed in one place for short periods and moved from one location to another. My parents never told me the reason⁴ for these sudden changes in their employment. However, in my child's mind, I began vaguely to perceive that there was some kind of a secret that my parents kept zealously concealed from me. My mother often admonished my father for not being cautious with what he was saying in my presence—she was always afraid that I could inadvertently tell it to somebody.

From their discussions about the problems my father had at work and from the occasional comments about people who were causing them, I already understood that there were many malevolent people who were harassing my father. But most important, it was clear to me that all of them were Bolsheviks, members of the Communist Party, and officials of the Soviet government. By the time I was in the fourth grade, I already detested these people. I loved my father and knew that he was a good and just person who was not capable of harming anybody.

Therefore, I resented that these “damned Bolsheviks”—as my father called them in moments of exasperation—were making my father’s life difficult and my mother tense and nervous. I knew that to escape all this, they were leaving their employment and moving to new places.

At Slavyansk Kurort we rented a room from a woman who lived not far from the Pine Forest Park. We had our board at the Kurort cafeteria, where we paid in advance for the whole month to have three meals a day. In the morning we walked there for our breakfast, and from there it was a short walk to the bath and therapy building. There I received therapy on the left side of my face with applications of hot mud from the Salty Lake. My mother was taking the spa treatments of warm *rapa*—the salty water from the lake—as a therapy to relax and relieve her nervous tension caused by the precarious situation of my father at work.

After the therapy session we walked back to the cafeteria for lunch and then, during the hot part of the day, we would have a long walk in the shady Pine Forest park, find a nice place to hang a hammock between two pine trees, and relax breathing the pure, clean air scented with the pine trees’ fragrance. We were borrowing books from the Kurort library and taking them with us everywhere to read. In the late afternoon, when the sun was low, we went to the Salty Lake to sunbathe on the sandy beach, and I would have fun splashing in the warm salty water. But I never learned to swim.

The separate men’s and women’s beaches were surrounded on three sides with a high wooden fence that extended far from the shore into the water. This fence was erected because there was no requirement to wear swimming suits, and most women and girls on the beach were naked, although some wore their regular bras and panties, and a few wore bathing suits. This custom was probably established because bathing suits were very hard to buy in the small town. One could always recognize the health resort visitors from the large cities where it was possible to buy swimming suits in the Lux⁵ stores at exorbitant prices. The adults, teenagers, and little girls and boys who were admitted there with their mothers were used to seeing the naked women on the beach as they were walking, lying on the sand, and bathing in the lake; and it seemed that nobody paid any attention to the nudity. But I was always amazed at how many different shapes and sizes the

female body could develop and how ugly and deformed some of them were. I was glad that my mother had a slender figure.

From the beach my mother and I would go to the well maintained Kurort Park. There were flower gardens, small fountains, and here and there were sculptures made from concrete. On the paved alleys were many benches to sit and rest on. Until suppertime we would sit on a bench, enjoy the view of the well-groomed colorful flowerbeds, read books, and watch the people leisurely walking by.



Vera Mikhailovna Gladkaya during her visit to the family of her brother Orest. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1935. Photo by Orest M. Gladky

On Sundays there were no therapy sessions, and we took the local train called *Vyetka* and visited my grandfather in the town of Slavyansk. Since these were the years when I was growing fast, every summer my grandfather sewed for me a winter coat from

one of my father's old wool suits. He would rip it apart on the seams, clean it, and, turning the wrong, non-faded side out, would combine the pieces to make me a straight coat with a quilted lining.

That summer, my mother found for herself a position teaching Russian in the Teachers' Technicum in Slavyansk⁶ and right away received an apartment with one large room and a kitchen in the teachers' apartment building. My father immediately shipped our possessions from the hamlet of Kisyelyevka and joined us before the beginning of the school year. But he was not able to find a teaching position and stayed home for the whole year, devoting himself to his hobby of photography.

In the back of the teachers' apartment house there was a big fruit garden with tall old pear and apple trees and a courtyard where I could play. In addition, all the neighbors had fruit gardens, trees, and flowering bushes. After living on the third floor in the dusty coal-mine hamlet of Kisyelyevka,⁷ where there were no trees and no place to stay outside to play, this was a real haven for me.

In the whole apartment house there was only one girl of my age, Nina, a daughter of the Technicum's art teacher. We played together outside in good weather and mostly in her apartment when the weather was bad. Her father allowed us to use colored pencils and drawing paper and taught us some techniques. I still remember him showing us how to enlarge a design by drawing a smaller grid on it with a ruler and then to enlarge the design by drawing the shapes on the paper with the larger size grid. We also competed in drawing our own geometrical shapes on the graph paper and then coloring them.



*Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky) with injured fledgling fallen from the nest in the fruit garden of the apartment building for the teachers of Slavyansk Teacher's Technicum. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1935.
Photo by Orest M. Gladky.*



Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky) dressed up as a peasant girl for the occasion of photographing the first tomatoes from their small garden near the apartment building for the teachers of Slavyansk Teacher's Technicum. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1936. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.

We lived in that apartment for two years. One of the most enjoyable tasks in the fall was to climb the huge pear tree and collect the special sort of pears that we called "winter pears." They were hard and not ready to eat right away; they needed to remain indoors for a long time to ripen. While Nina, a few older boys, and I climbed high on the tree, collected fruit from the branches in bags, and brought them down, the teachers' families divided the crop under the tree. We had a supply of pears for several months, selecting those to eat that were becoming ripe.

That old pear tree in the garden was so high that, during some festivities when there were aerial exhibitions and parachute jumps at the small local airport, we would climb all the way to the top and from there enjoy the spectacle.

In the beginning of the summer, we saw cherries that were ripening in a neighbor's fruit garden. There was a high wooden fence that we would climb and sit on, admiring the shiny red fruit that was out of our reach. Nina and I were very tempted by it. So, we invented a tool that allowed us to reach and pick the cherries. We cut two long, sturdy branches from a bush, and at the end of each, we attached a wire shaped in a small circle with the pointed end squeezed as a beak that had just enough space to hold the stem of the cherry.

It was a difficult task to sit on the high fence, holding yourself with one hand to keep from falling down and with the other hand holding the long rod, trying to center the cherry in the wire circle; then you had to pull it slowly up to the stem and, with a quick tug, tear it off. We would sit there "fishing" one cherry at a time and eating it right on the spot. We didn't collect the cherries to bring home—we knew that our parents would not approve.

For several days we "fished" the cherries without being seen, but finally the garden's owner caught us. He began to scream at us and threaten that he would go and tell our parents. "Didn't your parents teach you that it is wrong to steal?" he asked us and ordered, "Give me those rods!" We surrendered them to him. He inspected them and shaking his head wondered at how cleverly

we had made our tools. But he understood that we couldn't collect too many cherries with them. We knew that what we were doing was wrong and promised him that we would not do it again. He didn't come to complain to our parents, Nina and I had a good scare and a lesson that stealing even a few cherries was wrong.

Nina and I got along quite well, except she was jealous over a cat that belonged to someone in the building. Everybody was feeding him on the long porch where he stayed most of the time. One day I came to feed the cat at the same time when Nina was feeding him, and she pushed me away, not allowing me to put the food in his dish. I had a big spoon in my hand, and, in defending myself, I struck her hard on the forehead. I probably hurt her pretty badly, because she began to cry, and her father even complained to my mother. After that Nina didn't talk to me for a long time, and I missed her company.

After this happened, my father gave me a little kitten that grew into a nice, gentle light blue-gray cat named Murka. She kept me company, sleeping on my lap when I was doing my homework. She also slept on my bed, warming my feet that were always cold, even in the summer. My father taught Murka all kinds of tricks and took many photographs of her. Nina had no other girls to play with, and she wanted to play with my kitten, so she made peace with me, and, as before, we played together after school.

In the winter, Nina and I used to join many other children and skate down the hill on Kharkovsky Street—now renamed Shevchenko Street—on the frozen snow that had been packed by passing carts, sleds, and rare automobiles. We had a special type of skates called *Snyegurochka* with rounded front points designed specifically for skating on the packed snow. It was great fun. When we would reach Railroad Street, sometimes we would go to the Shelkovychnyy⁸ Park to skate on the frozen pond.

Nina had an older sister and a cousin living with the family in their one-room-and-kitchen apartment. They both attended the Teachers' Technicum. Some evenings when I was playing with Nina in their kitchen, I observed the beauty rituals of these two young women. I never before saw anyone else, and especially not my mother, groom as they did. They would use some kind of a liquid to wet their hair, shape it with their fingers to make flat

waves, and secure them with bobby pins. Then they used a cream to spread on their faces and hands, and pulled the hair from their eyebrows with tweezers to make them thin and shapely. For me, all of this was new. I found it strange that they devoted so much attention and time to these tasks. But they looked pretty and fashionable when they left home in the morning.

During the school year 1934–1935 I attended the fifth grade in the Russian Seven-Years-School located all the way at the Shnurkovka stop of the local railroad branch. For me it was a very long walk, first down Kharkovsky Street to Railroad Street and then along the tracks to the next train stop. On my way I often encountered a boy from my class who lived in one of the houses on Kharkovsky Street, and we walked to school together.

At that age boys are not interested in girls yet. But for me as a girl, it was the first time that I had the companionship of a boy of my age. He was also a son of a teacher. His name was Fima⁹ Zusmanovich, and his nationality was Jewish.¹⁰ Compared to the boys from the school in the hamlet of Kiselyevka who teased my friend, Tamara, and me, Fima was very polite and friendly. After a while I began to fantasize that I was in love with him and talked about him at home so much that my mother figured it out and asked me if I liked him. But I didn't give her a straight answer, being almost ashamed of this new feeling. Fimka, as everybody called him, also understood that I had a crush on him, and he began to tease me about it, which I didn't like at all. This quickly changed my infatuation with him to disdain, and I could never forgive him for it.

In the fifth grade I didn't have to work hard on the assignments, which I found to be easy and made good grades in all subjects. But that year was completely uneventful for me. I don't remember any of my teachers, and I didn't develop any friendships with girls or boys.

At home my father and I were helping my mother every evening to correct mountains of dictation papers of her students from the Teachers' Technicum, and sometimes my Uncle Petya¹¹ also came to help us with this tedious chore. But this experience was very useful for me, since I learned the correct spelling of words, sentence structure, and punctuation in Russian.

My father didn't find employment that year, and he was at home all day. He was involved with his photography hobby and

was teaching me all the steps in picture taking, developing the negatives, printing, and enlarging the photos. I liked to be with him and was also enthusiastic about learning all the tricks of the trade. We made many pictures during that year, experimenting with lighting, backgrounds, and enlargements. It was the best time of my childhood that I remember. I loved to be with my father and liked his teaching of interesting things from which I could see immediate, practical results. I think that it added to my natural child's drive of discovery and reinforced my love of learning new skills.

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1. See the chapter "Return to My Hometown of Slavyansk."
 2. Health resort.
 3. See the chapter "Hamlet Kisyelyevka."
 4. See the chapters "White Army Volunteers," "Home at Last," "It's Time to Go!" and "Nikitovka's Last Gentleman."
 5. Luxury stores.
 6. See the chapter "Return to My Hometown of Slavyansk."
 7. See the chapter "Hamlet Kisyelyevka."
 8. Mulberry.
 9. Casual nickname for Yefim.
 10. In the Soviet Union, Jewish was considered a nationality, rather than a religion.
 11. The youngest brother of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky.



Being a Part of a Big Berezhnoy Family

By Olga Gladky Verro

My mother complained for some time that the assistant director of the Teachers' Technicum was making her life difficult by seizing any chance to find all kinds of faults. She explained to me that he was a Ukrainian nationalist who hated Russians and targeted his hatred on her because she was teaching Russian. Therefore, at the end of the school year, my mother resigned from teaching there, and we had to vacate the teachers' apartment.

In the beginning of summer, we rented and moved into a recently finished, clean-as-a-whistle apartment in the new house of my grandmother's¹ brother, Dmitry Pyetrovich Boyko, at Number 12 on Kalinin Street. It was a very nice apartment with two rooms and a kitchen, with big windows allowing plenty of light and sunshine. There were many fruit trees in the backyard, a big vegetable garden, and a courtyard where I could play. But I regretted losing my playmate Nina, who lived now very far away, and I was upset that in the new neighborhood there were no girls my age to play with.

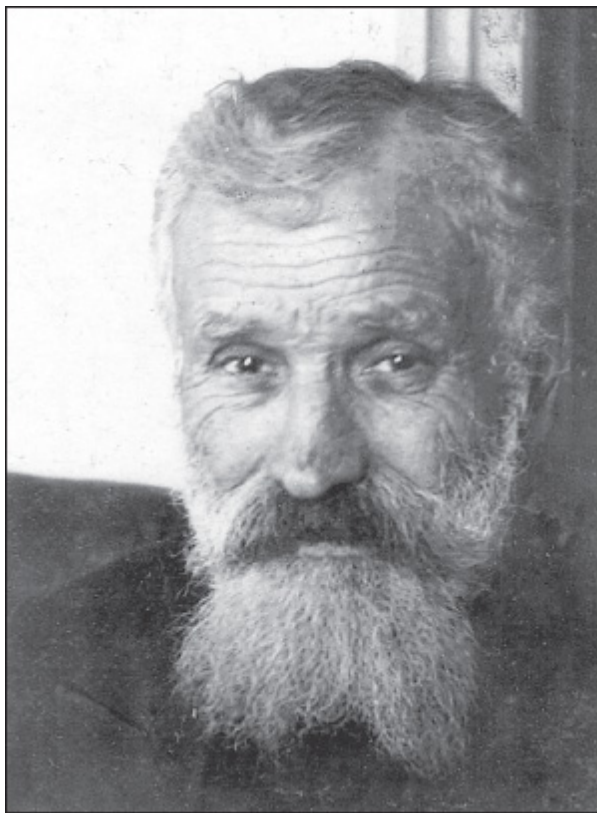
However, that summer my mother's older sister, Tanya,² with her husband, Solomon Moisyeyevich Tatarsky, and their only daughter, Murochka,³ came to visit my grandfather and us in Slavyansk. Also, at that time my Aunt Nyusya⁴ arrived from Kharkov to see her father and to take spa treatments at the Slavyansk Kurort to recover from her nervous breakdown; she still suffered from the death of her son, Talik.⁵ She had just recently returned from a medical expedition in a remote Asiatic region of the Soviet Union. There, as an eye doctor, she was on a mission to eradicate the contagious eye illness trachoma and to perform eye operations to prevent blindness resulting from it.



Berezhnoy family reunion. First row from left: Antonina (Tonya) Gavriyllovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); Maria (Musya) Fyedorovna Dyeryughina Berezhnaya, wife of Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy; Anna (Nyusya) Gavriyllovna Berezhnaya; Marianna (Murochka) Solomonovna Tatarskaya; Father, Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy; second row: Solomon Moisyeyevich Tatarsky, husband of Tatyana Gavriyllovna Berezhnaya; Pyetr (Petya) Gavriylovich Berezhnoy; Tatyana (Tanya) Gavriyllovna Berezhnaya Tatarskaya. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1936. Photo by Olga Gladkaya.

When my mother's sisters arrived, their father, Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy, invited them all for a dinner. My mother and I were also present. But my father was visiting his sisters at that time. My mother's sister-in-law Musya,⁶ the wife of my Uncle Ivan,⁷ was also invited. She lived in Slavyansk with her daughter Yelena, nicknamed, like me, Lyalya, while for some reason unknown to me at that time, her husband, my Uncle Ivan,⁷ was always working somewhere in another town. My Uncle Petya,⁸ who had come for the summer to stay with his father, was also there.

In my grandmother's home—she always emphasized that it was her home—there was hardly a space for everybody to sit at the table that stood at the end of the room where the icon and the oil lamp hung in the corner. At the other end of the room there was a huge bed, and across from it stood a big wardrobe, leaving a narrow passage.



Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1936–1937. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.

My grandfather was very happy to see so many of his children gathered together and visiting him at the same time. My grandmother prepared a big dinner almost as festive as she used to do in the last two years when we were invited to celebrate the Easter and Christmas Holidays with my grandfather and her sons from her first marriage.

It was a joyous occasion for everybody who gathered there. There was a lot to talk about and to share with each other: news about their families, children, and work. Being together with all of my mother's relatives and hearing their recollections about their past and present life was a memorable occasion for me. I suddenly became aware of being a member of the big Berezhnoy family. At the center of it was my grandfather, an old patriarch, with gray hair, beard, and moustache that hid his smile. But his

eyes smiled as he looked with pride at his children and grandchildren.



*Anna (Nyusya) Gavriylovna Berezhnaya, Kharkov, Kharkovsky Region,
Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1937.*

At that time, I was already skillful in using a camera. I placed it on a tripod, focused to include everybody, and took a photograph⁹ of the family members who were present.

My Aunt Tanya stayed in Slavyansk for only a few days because her husband, Solomonchik—as we affectionately called him—had to return to work. They left my cousin Murochka to stay with us for three weeks. For Murochka it was a real vacation to stay in the small town of Slavyansk, where there were many trees and plenty of places to play outside. Where they lived in the semi-basement apartment of a huge brick building in the central part of the big industrial town of Stalino,¹⁰ she was confined to playing either inside or on the sidewalk under their windows.

Murochka was a very pretty girl with dark tresses, and she resembled her mother a lot. She was about three years younger than I, and we had lots of fun playing together. There was a comfortable place for her to stay in our apartment. We stayed in one room, she slept in my bed, and I slept on the sofa, while my parents had their bed in another room. On some days my mother took us to the Kurort to rest in the pine-forest park and play on the sandy beach or splash in the water of the Salty Lake.

That summer, I really enjoyed the visit of my younger cousin because it was the first time that she had stayed with us. I took many pictures of Murochka, and she liked most of them. But being a very sensitive girl, she detested one photo—the one I snapped of her while she was licking the sweet foam from a plate where my mother had skimmed it while cooking preserves. And she also didn't like it when I teased her about something.

My Aunt Tanya lived for a long time in the town of Stalino, where Solomon Moisyeyevich worked in the *Sagotzerno*—a Regional Grain Procurement Office. Although Murochka was three years younger than I, my mother maintained a close relationship with Tanya to give me and Murochka a chance to know each other better since we were the first girls born to the sisters in the Berezhnoy family. During the summer and winter school vacations, we visited each other and spent several weeks either at our or Tanya's place.

Previously, when she was too young, it was I who had visited her and usually stayed for about a week during the school vacation. But their apartment confined us to play inside because there wasn't a nice place to play outside. Now that she was older and could visit me, we found interesting games to play together and enjoyed each other. When she left, I really missed her.

That summer passed by very quickly, and I had to go back to school. This year I was going to attend the seventh grade in the newly built secondary Ten-Years-School Number 15.

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1. Anna Petrovna Boyko Ploskogolovaya, the second wife of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy.
 2. Tatyana, the older sister of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky. See the chapter "Tatyana Gavriylovna Berezhnaya."

3. Marianna Solomonovna Tatarskaya, daughter of Tatyana Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Tatarskaya and Solomon Moisyeyevich Tatarsky.
4. Anna, the younger sister of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky. See the chapter "Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya."
5. See the chapter "Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria Outbreak."
6. Maria Fyedorovna Dyeryughina Berezhnaya. See the chapter "Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy" in the book "In the Web of History."
7. Ivan, the younger brother of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky.
8. Pyetr, the youngest brother of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky. See the chapter "Pyetr Gavriylovich Berezhnoy."
9. Family photograph, 1937.
10. The former town of Yusovka that was renamed to Stalino by the Bolsheviks.



The Keynote Speaker at the Conference

By Antonina G. Gladky

Sometime in the beginning of 1935, all Soviet newspapers, even those in the smaller provincial towns, printed a photograph of Comrade Khrushchev, who was appointed as the new First Secretary of the Committee of the Communist Bolshevik Party of Moscow District. A short article about his political career stated that the new first secretary was of proletarian origins, that he took part in the civil war on the southern front, that he worked as a coal miner in Donbas, and studied at the Rabfak of the Donetsky Coalminers' Technicum,¹ and that he graduated from the Moscow Industrial Academy. In the major newspaper "Pravda" they described him as a distinguished representative of the post-revolutionary generation of communist workers brought up by the great Stalin himself. Then I saw his photograph again in our local newspaper and I read underneath: "Nikita Sergyeyevich Khrushchev."

"Khrushchev!" I exclaimed and showed my husband a photograph. "Doesn't it sound familiar to you the name of Nikita Khrushchev?"

"Yes," replied my husband, "and the face looks very familiar, too."

"Is it possible, that he is the one I taught Russian language to thirteen years ago at the Rabfak² in Yusovka?"

"Sure, sure, there is no doubt—he is the one!"

"Look, in the article it says that he had studied at the Rabfak of the Donetsky Coalminers' Technicum, where I taught!"

"That's right," my husband confirmed after reading the article.

"Is it possible," I asked, "that he received enough educational background at the Rabfak to be admitted to and graduate from the Industrial Academy? And what kind of educational institution is it?"

"I have no idea," said my husband. "But 'academy' sounds very impressive."

"But I don't remember that Khrushchev was such an outstanding student capable of attending such a prestigious institution," I reflected. "However, at that time he was certainly very active in the Communist Party."

But it wasn't surprising that the former half-illiterate Nikita, who didn't even have any record of revolutionary activity in the past, had reached such a high position within the Communist Party apparatus so quickly. There were many new party leaders with similar backgrounds. But from his rapid rise to such a high position within the Bolshevik Party, one could conclude that Khrushchev learned well how the party apparatus worked and he, obviously, very quickly mastered all ins and outs of high party leaders' cabinets.

And I suddenly remembered my former student Khrushchev's admiration of a popular hero, Pugachev, when he commented about him in my class: "He was a cunning muzhik, wasn't he? And how quick-witted he was in his moves! He outsmarted them all!"³ And I thought, *Cunning Nikita, on the sly, he was able to get to power.*

For the masses he was a new man since until now his name had never been used so widely in the national press. But it should be mentioned that the common people were mostly indifferent to the names of persons holding Communist Party positions; they were more interested in settling their personal lives. In any case, for me it was a big surprise to find out that my former student Nikita Khrushchev had come into power.

From then on, the newspapers started to report more and more about him and to print his photographs, and some were with Stalin himself, which was a sure sign of being admitted to the high-power circle of the Communist Party apparatus.

In the summer of the same year, I went to Moscow⁴ for my final examinations and to defend my thesis as a candidate for a degree in Russian language and literature. For four years my husband and I had been studying at the correspondence courses for teachers. The courses were offered for the first time by the Moscow Pedagogical Institute to those who were already teaching with various qualifications, but now were required to have a degree from an institution of higher learning.

This was our last year of studies, and to be admitted to the final examinations, the Institute required all students to present their autobiography, documents about the student's right to vote, and father's pre-revolutionary social status issued by the Town Soviet. For the male students, their military card was required as well. Since my husband had been a *lishenyets*⁵ and former White Army volunteer,⁶ he could not present all those documents having politically clean connotations, he had no other choice but to not apply for the final exams. His only hope was that, with the shortage of teachers, his four years of successful studies at the Institute would be considered as quasi-equivalent to a degree. Therefore, I went to Moscow alone.

When I arrived at the Institute, I saw a huge poster in the lobby with the announcement that, by the initiative of the First Secretary of the Committee of the Communist Bolshevik Party of Moscow District, Comrade Nikita Khrushchev, a Conference of Moscow Region Teachers had been organized. I thought, "Maybe I could seize an opportunity and try to see my former student. It seems to be a very appropriate event for such an encounter. All I need is to get a ticket for the conference." I went to the institute's office and asked for a ticket.

"The conference is only for the teachers of the Moscow Region," replied one of the employees.

"Well," I answered boldly, "it is an exceptional case. You see, I am a former teacher of Comrade Khrushchev and would like to meet him after so many years."

Of course, right away I saw a surprise on the faces of all present in the office. Somebody asked me, "How it could be? You look like you are of the same age as he is."

"It's true," I answered, "but he was my student in 1922–1924, when he was about twenty-eight years old."

More questions followed from the office employees. When they were convinced of my story, they handed me a ticket.

Back in the students' dormitory, when some of the teachers from the correspondence courses found out from me that I was going to see Khrushchev, they entrusted me to ask him when there would be, finally, a raise in the salaries of *shkrabs*,⁷ as were called all who worked in the schools, including the teachers.

The conference was held in the evening in the Chaikovsky Concert Hall. When I arrived, the hall was already full of

delegates. As I looked around, I saw mostly young faces. I was able to find a very comfortable seat, right in the middle of the row and quite close to the stage. In the center of the stage there was a long table covered with a bright-red heavy cloth, and the representatives of the presidium and of the secretariat of the conference were already seated. Shortly after, somebody seated on the stage asked everyone to take their seats. As the humming in the hall turned into a barely detectable faint sound, the president of the conference announced the opening of "The 1935 Conference of Moscow District Teachers" and then introduced Comrade Khrushchev as a keynote speaker. Khrushchev walked on stage, and all attending the conference stood up and greeted him with a long applause.

Comrade Khrushchev took a place at the podium and started his speech. I was observing with great interest how he was conducting himself, his manners and especially his speech, trying to catch the details of how much my former student had improved in his education. I was surprised that he didn't have a speech carefully prepared in advance, but was speaking impromptu, to suit the occasion. Therefore, it was easy for me to compare his speech patterns and manners with those he had thirteen years ago, as I remembered them.

From the first words, I could recognize that he had mastered very well the technique of addressing meetings, the communist jargon, and the words and phrases coined by the party. As I remember it now after so many years, he started his speech by greeting teachers from the Central Committee of the Communist Party and praising the party's wise leadership and guidance in the victorious building of socialism. He followed it with a profuse tribute to Stalin, the leader of communism and father of the working masses of the whole world. He spoke solemnly and pronounced each word clearly and distinctly.

In the main portion of his speech, Khrushchev called on the teachers to steadfastly follow the great Communist Party line on each step of bringing up and training the future generations of the builders of socialism. Then he reminded them about Lenin's promise to put the educators in the socialist society so high in prestige, as they "never been, or are they now, or they never would be" in the capitalist world.

Then he changed his tone of voice to a higher pitch, and, in

place of pathos, his speech became colored with threats. He started to urge all teachers to increase their vigilance and to watch for the "enemies of the people," for the "Trotskyites,"⁸ for the "agents of the fascists," for the "spies," the "wreckers," the "saboteurs," the "rightists," and the "leftists" stooges, and all others who were trying to interfere with the building of socialism. After the pathetic expressions of this kind, his speech was interrupted several times with applause from the audience.

Khrushchev was so involved in the political correctness of his speech and in the emotional effect on his listeners that he was not concerned about speaking grammatically correct. He was constantly changing the expression on his face according to the context. He either had a very stern face, or was knitting his eyebrows, or raising them and opening his eyes wide, or he was making his face look angry or menacing. And when his emotions would become so high that he couldn't find any more words to express what he wanted to say, he would start to help himself by making energetic gestures with his hands and arms, a distinct trait which I remembered from his years as a student. He would strike his chest with his fist or raise his right hand with a pointed finger at some invisible enemy, or he would menacingly raise his arm high above his head and with a tight fist threaten the "imperialists," "capitalists," "world bourgeoisie," "instigators of war," and all those who were obstacles on the road to building socialism-communism.

After this litany Khrushchev solemnly declared, "Anyone who would dare to infringe on our victorious march toward building communism will be crushed, squashed, and destroyed once and for all!" Grand applause by the teachers followed.

Finally, the speaker came to the end of his speech, when he had to make his final conclusions. This was the most important and the most pathetic part of his speech. At this point Khrushchev expressed his loyalty and devotion to the Communist Party and its great leader Stalin. But it wasn't a speech anymore; it was a song of praise with the never-ending repetition of a leitmotif "*Da zdavstuyet*," which means "Long live" followed by many communists clichés such as: "Long live our leader and teacher, great Stalin!" "Long live our Bolshevik Communist Party!" "Long live proletariats of the whole world!"

Of course, each "Long live" was followed by unanimous

applause in the hall. The psychological effect was indisputably tremendous. I also clapped my hands and stood up following the crowd. Like everybody else in the hall, I had to show my “spontaneous and sincere enthusiasm” to these nauseating exaltations, because you never knew who was sitting next to you, or behind you, and could report on you...

When Khrushchev finished his speech, I felt complete disappointment. I expected from such a highly positioned leader and keynote speaker something new, original, expressing his own ideas and opinions. Instead, his speech had a stereotyped pattern, like most of the speeches of the other party leaders. He did not introduce even one word of his own; everything he said was exactly according to the instructions of the party and *Agitprop* literature. All slogans and clichés were word for word the same as one could read them in the newspapers “Pravda” and “Izvestia.”

As far as his language, it was as before, a mixture of popular Russian and some Ukrainian words, and I didn’t observe any noticeable changes in his patterns of speech. Very often his sentences were constructed incorrectly and many times, because of the long deviations from the subject, the logical connections between the phrases and sentences were absent. But, notwithstanding all of these mannerisms, poor speech patterns, and a constant use of coined phrases, when he finished his speech, all had understood the message of what he intended to convey to the teachers—he called upon the teachers to bring up their pupils in the spirit of socialism-communism.

I have to confess that I felt ashamed for my student’s shortcomings in the language and also to some degree for myself, as his former teacher, and was almost happy that nobody who was sitting close to me knew that he was my former student. “However,” I thought, “Comrade Zablodsky, his former teacher of political education at Rabfak, would have been very proud of his student.”

But all my impressions did not interfere with my idea of encountering Khrushchev in person. The question was how to do it? Right when I was contemplating it, from the stage somebody announced that if there were any questions to the speaker, the teachers could write them on a piece of paper and pass them to the table. I saw small pieces of paper being passed forward from row to row. I took a whole page from my notebook and wrote

simply: "Comrade Khrushchev, I am your former teacher from the Rabfak in Yuzovka, and I would like to say hello to you." My idea was that the big piece of paper would give me a chance to see when it was forwarded to him, and I would be able to observe his reaction to it. In fact, the size of paper had an immediate result—it was forwarded to Khrushchev first—although the other papers had arrived at the table before mine. I saw that he was smiling when he was reading my note.

But to my surprise, when all the questions were answered and the conference was declared closed, the heavy curtain fell down and covered the stage. I hadn't received any answer to my note and was losing my hope for an encounter with my famous former student. Everybody in the hall remained in their seats waiting for the concert to be held as an entertainment for the conferees.

After a while a group of people, including those who were sitting at the big table on the stage during the conference, came from the side door, and one of them was holding a big piece of paper, which he was waving. He loudly announced, "Is the person, who wrote this note still here?" I understood that he was holding my paper and that he was referring to me. I still remember that I was suddenly overcome by a feeling of agitation as I was making my way toward the aisle between the people sitting in the chairs.

I stopped in the aisle waiting to see if my former student, who was standing in front of the group, would recognize me or not. I saw Khrushchev smiling; then he came closer, reaching out his hand to greet me.

"Do you recognize me?" I asked.

"Yes, of course, I remember, you were teaching me Russian language!"

His simplicity won over my excitement, and I felt at ease. He invited me to sit next to him during the concert in the first row, where commissars and all members of the presidium and secretariat of the conference were sitting. I remember that Bubnov, the commissar of the People's Commissariat of Education, observed Khrushchev and me talking, and joined us in conversation. And I remember very well that he asked me if Khrushchev was a good student and how many times I had to punish him by putting him in a corner when he didn't remember the right answers for declinations¹⁰ of nouns, pronouns, and

adjectives. And I detected a veiled joke by Commissar Bubnov, who made a delicate hint to me that he was also aware of Khrushchev's shortcomings in Russian grammar.

Before the concert started, I carefully observed my former student. I remembered him at the Rabfak when he was skinny, with hollow cheeks, wearing a visor cap and dressed like a real proletarian. Now, he had noticeably put on some weight, his face and cheeks had become rounded, and he was looking more like a capitalist with a visible belly and quite a large bald spot on his head. He was still wearing a traditional Russian shirt with buttons on one side, and a wide stand-up collar. However, I noticed that the shirt was made of a very good quality fabric and was perfectly hand-embroidered. The Blue cornflowers embroidered with silk yarn were shining on the collar, cuffs, and hem border of the shirt. The shirt was tied around his waist with a narrow leather belt with silver tips hanging at the ends. As before, he wore high boots, but now they were made from good quality soft leather and were shined to perfection. But more than anything else, I noticed his apparent self-confidence. He behaved like he was in charge of the situation.

The concert was wonderful. All famous artists and singers, whom I had occasionally heard on the radio, were taking part in the concert and were performing one after another: Barsova, Lyemyeshev, Kozlovsky, David Oystrakh, Ryna Zelyenaya, and many others. I was impressed that Khrushchev knew all of them well. He was telling me something about each of them and was commenting on their performance. I had to admit to myself that, in this knowledge, my former student, as a dweller of the capital city, had surpassed his teacher, who lived in the province.

I was sitting on the left of Khrushchev, and it was easy for me to observe him because he had to turn somewhat to see the center of the stage. Now that he was not giving an engaging speech and didn't have to act, his face had transformed. It was pleasant to see him being himself in his natural simplicity. And I saw again his smiling eyes as I remembered them from many years ago. He looked as though he was enjoying the concert immensely. When Barsova had finished singing his preferred song "Polyushko-Polye," it gave him such pleasure that he couldn't stop applauding, and she repeated it a second time.

The concert went on for a long time, and I suddenly

remembered that I had not yet asked Khrushchev the question delegated to me by the teachers. Finally, I caught a moment during a short break and stated my question straightforward, "Nikita Sergeyevich, are you aware about the situation of the teachers? What do you think—isn't it time for us to get a raise?"

"I know that the situation has to be improved. In April you will have a raise," he said concisely and forcibly, like he had decided this question already a long time ago.

"Thank you for the good news," I answered with a real feeling of gratitude in my voice.

I wanted to listen to the end of the concert, but I was worrying about how I would get to the students' dormitory. It was already late, and I couldn't catch the last streetcar or bus. I got up during the next break and started to say goodbye to Nikita Sergeyevich.

He was very surprised and asked me, "Why are you leaving? Don't you want to stay until the end of such an unusual concert?"

"Yes, very much. But it is late, Nikita Sergeyevich, and I am afraid there will be no streetcars or buses to get back to the dormitory."

He quickly turned to the second row, where all his aides-de-camp were sitting and categorically ordered, "At once, immediately, give an order for the buses to come to the door of the Concert Hall for transporting all delegates home after the concert. Also, announce to all delegates that they can stay and listen to the concert until the end and not worry about the streetcars and buses—transportation will be available!"

He said all this with a tone of voice that did not allow for any objection. It was clear that he was already used to issuing commands and ordering people about. His orders were immediately executed, but regretfully for some delegates, it was too late; many had already left.

When the concert was over, I thought that, for the second time in my teaching career, I had to say farewell to Khrushchev and asked him, "Do you remember what you said to me at our previous parting?"

"Only the mountains cannot move, but persons may always see each other again," we repeated together a proverb, and we both started to laugh.

When he shook my hand, I said, "Well, Nikita Sergeyevich, until we meet again!"

Very late that night the special bus took us to the door of the Institute dormitory, which was located near the Novodyevichy Monastery. In the morning, with a vain hope, I searched in the newspapers for some mention of my encounter with Khrushchev. But this event was left unnoticed by the press and by the public. How could it be ignored? That evening, I was the only woman sitting with the communist leaders in the first row during the whole concert. This was at a time when powerful leaders did not appear in public with their wives. It was very unusual for Khrushchev, as for any other communist leader of his status, to appear in a public place with a common mortal not belonging to the circle of the privileged communist hierarchy. This demonstrated that news reporters could report in the press only "politically important" events, and their reports probably were planned and authorized in advance.

When I started to describe my encounter with Khrushchev to the teachers in our dormitory, they didn't show great interest in my story. They impatiently asked me, "How about the raise in our salaries? Did you ask him?"

"Yes," I answered, disillusioned with their indifference to hearing details about the life of one of the high-ranking communist leaders. And I replied distinctly, "Khrushchev's exact words were, 'In April you will have a raise.'"

They commented with skepticism, "They all promise a lot!"

"But we always have to wait and wait!"

"And we have been waiting already for a long, long time!"

But I was really surprised when, shortly after my departure from Moscow, it was announced that beginning the first of April, the teachers would receive a substantial increase in their salaries that had been substandard for many years compared to the common workers' pay. I remembered well that date and my thought, "Either Khrushchev knew already the date when the raise in the teachers pay would be announced, or he was already powerful enough to promote the teachers' raise and kept his word."

I passed my final examinations with flying colors, and I successfully defended my thesis in Russian language. My topic was some Russian grammar problems that I had encountered by working with the adult students.

There was a ceremony dedicated to the first graduation of

students from the pedagogical correspondence course of the Moscow Pedagogical Institute. The students were congratulated by some officials from the Central Commissariat of People's Education, by the director of the Institute, and by the dean of the correspondence course. The students were told that they could receive their diplomas in the dean's office the next day. All students were relieved that this milestone in their education had been reached and that they could present their credentials to their Republic's Commissariat of People's Education, which would issue them a certificate, called *Attestat*,¹¹ for a title of secondary school teacher.

When I went the next day to the dean's office to receive my diploma, I had to wait in line because most of the students were from out of town, and they wanted to receive them as soon as possible. When it was my turn, the secretary gave me my *Attestat* and told me that the dean wanted to talk to me. I was puzzled, because all the others had gotten their paper and left.

I waited patiently until the dean was ready to receive me and was surprised to hear his friendly greetings. He told me that my name had been suggested by the Department of Russian Language and Literature as a possible candidate for the *aspirantura*, as postgraduate studentship was called, and that I had a good chance to receive a grant from the Institute for the next school year. He advised me that I should apply for it as soon as possible and that the secretary would give me all the forms and instructions for the application. I was astonished with this offer, because I had never expected it or even dreamt about.

I remember that I said only, "It's so unexpected that I can't give you an answer right away. But I am very grateful for your offer."

In dismissing me the dean advised, "It is a great opportunity for you. I heard that you are almost assured to be accepted; don't wait too long with your application."

I took the forms from the secretary, and she told me that they had to be back in the office before the end of that month. I was glad that there was enough time to go home and make a decision by discussing it with my husband.

During my long trip home on the train, I had plenty of time to think about the opportunity of being accepted as an aspirant, a graduate student and lecturer that, for some unknown reason had

been presented to me on a silver platter. I wondered if this offer had been made because of my thesis, or because someone had found out that I was Khrushchev's teacher. But this was not as important as the opportunity to enhance my career in education. I could eventually teach in the institutes or even in the universities.

I was thinking, "What a challenge it would be in teaching the teachers how to teach, to share with them my experience gained during all these years... And then, it also would mean living in a larger town or a city, maybe even to remain in Moscow. What great opportunities would be available here for my daughter! The life in a big city would offer a lot of cultural activities, theaters, museums..." Everything seemed to be so wonderful in my imagination. I could not think about anything that would be bad or difficult in accepting this offer. The more I thought about it, the more I became convinced that I could finally look for a brighter future in my career. I could not think about anything that might interfere with this lucky opportunity; all I needed to do was to take it.

When I arrived home in Slavyansk, after greeting my husband, my first words were, "You wouldn't believe what wonderful news I have to tell you! At the Institute, the department of Russian language and literature has offered me *aspirantura* for the next school year."

"What?!" exclaimed my husband.

I joyfully repeated, "They offered me *aspirantura*."

He looked at me amazed that I could be so happy about it and asked anxiously, "By any chance, you didn't accept it yet?"

"No," I replied. "There are a lot of forms to be completed, and I decided that you and I could do it together."

"Thank God!" he said with relief, "You scared me."

"Why? It is a wonderful opportunity for me to improve my career in education. In a few years I could qualify to teach in the institutions of higher learning, maybe even remain in Moscow..."

My husband didn't allow me to continue and asked, "And what about me?"

"We would all move to Moscow, at least for the time I will be on *aspirantura*," I replied convincingly. "And you probably could find some teaching position there easier than here."

"Tonya!" my husband interrupted me, "Stop dreaming and think. Tell me, what would you write in the questionnaires about

your husband's political past?"

He looked at me expecting an explanation. I suddenly felt like a child who had been shown a candy he really wanted, but his father abruptly told him he couldn't have it.

My husband saw that I had no answer and suggested, "If you really want to pursue *aspirantura*, the only way to solve this problem is for us to get a divorce. Then you could leave your husband and his past political sins behind and be free to pursue your career."

I was devastated by his answer. But I didn't give up yet my hope and calmed my husband by saying, "Let's not make this decision so quickly. We have plenty of time to consider the other less radical choices." And I changed the subject by asking what he had done while I was away. And he also had some good news.

After many hours of discussing with my husband the possible solutions for my *aspirantura* and by carefully going over the numerous forms and questionnaires that I had to fill out, and by inspecting a list of documents that had to be submitted with the application, I had to admit that my husband was right. They required the documents issued by the Town Soviet about my father's and my husband's past and present social status. I came to the conclusion that I probably had very little chance of being accepted; since both my father and my husband were deprived of civil rights—they both were *lishenyets*—I certainly could not submit such documents. Therefore, I had to give up my short-lived dream and to remain teaching another year in the Teachers' Technicum in my hometown of Slavyansk.

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1. See the chapter "A Rabfak Student—Nikita Khrushchev"
 2. See the chapter "Khrushchev as a Political Figure at Rabfak."
 3. See the chapter "A Rabfak Student—Nikita Khrushchev."
 4. See the chapter "Return to My Hometown of Slavyansk."
 5. See the chapter "Nikitovka's Last Gentleman."
 6. See the chapter "White Army Volunteers."
 7. *Shkrab*—acronym for *Shkolny rabotnyk*—school worker.
 8. Followers of the exiled revolutionary leader Trotsky.
 9. *Agitprop*—acronym for *Agitaziya i Propaganda*—Agitation and

Propaganda.

10. In the Russian language nouns, pronouns, and adjectives take inflected forms to convey their meaning.
11. A copy of the Attestat was written in Ukrainian and Russian—as all official documents at that time were written in two languages: (1) Ukrainian—the language of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic where it was issued; and (2) Russian—the official language of the Soviet Union.



My Second Vacation in Crimea

By Olga Gladky Verro

In the summer of 1935, my mother and father were planning to go to Moscow for the final exams required for the graduation from the correspondence courses at the Moscow's Pedagogical Institute.¹ To provide a vacation for me, my mother applied and received a free accommodation for me for one month in the *sanatory*² in Crimea in the resort town of Yevpatoria, the same place where I'd stayed a few years before.³ My father accompanied me on the train to Crimea. This time I didn't cry, as I had during my first visit there. Although I didn't like the strict daily routine and the constant organized activities, this time I had a very good time on the shore of the Black Sea. I made some friends; I especially remember one nice boy who liked to be with me very much, and we spent all our free time together. This friendship restored my confidence in boys—not all of them were teasers. We even exchanged addresses and wrote several letters to each other.

When I returned from Crimea, I found out that my father didn't go for the exams to Moscow with my mother. It was very strange that he decided not to graduate that summer—he never explained to me the reasons. When my mother returned from Moscow with her diploma, I remember that I was very proud of her achievement. She was enthusiastic about the possibility of us moving to Moscow,⁴ but I couldn't figure out why my father objected to this so emphatically. It was never explained to me and was kept as a secret for many years, although I was already old enough to understand.

In the beginning of the school year 1935–1936, my father found a position teaching science in the Seven-Years-School that I attended, but that year I was transferred to the sixth grade in a smaller school on Kharkovsky Street, closer to where we lived.

Studying was very easy for me; I always had very good grades, and I didn't have to put much effort into doing my homework. Having my friend Nina to play with, I didn't make any close friends in school.

I remember one very strange episode that happened in our school that year. During the physical education class that was held in the courtyard, the teacher gave us a command to form three rows. I was standing at the end of the first row when from the other end the students began to laugh, and the whole group exploded in laughing. Most of us didn't know what had happened, but the laughing was contagious, and the teacher couldn't stop us, no matter how much she screamed. She ran into the office to complain.

The school director came down from the door that was behind us and caught several students laughing—those who didn't see her coming—and I was among them. We were reprimanded and given notes to take to our parents. Before going home, I found out from other students that one of the girls at the other end of the row had her dress spotted with blood; some boys began to laugh, and everybody just joined in without knowing the reason for it.

When I gave the note to my father and explained to him how this happened, he became furious. "That damn Communist! She calls herself an educator?—and she doesn't know how to educate children! I will tell her this tomorrow."

My mother tried to calm him down, "Orest, be careful please, don't use those words in the presence of your daughter."

"Oh, Mama, I am already used to hearing this from Papa. Don't you worry. I am old enough to know not to tell these things to anyone."

My mother looked at my father and shook her head, reproaching him for not being careful.

The next morning, my father came to school with me, and we went directly to the office of the school director, Comrade Malikova, who, like all bureaucrats in executive positions in the Soviet Union, was an inveterate Bolshevik.

After listening to the accusatory words of Malikova against me, my father in turn accused her harshly, by telling her that she didn't even investigate the incident thoroughly to find out that most of the students had no idea why everybody was laughing. He told her, "If you had to punish someone for what happened,

you should punish those who started it, not those who were at the other end of the row! You were interested only in finding scapegoats, not the real culprits. What kind of education is this to punish innocent children?"

"But I caught your daughter laughing," she justified herself.

"All students were laughing," replied my father, "Why haven't you punished them all?"

Malikova became very upset because my father was accusing her in my presence and, being aware that her reputation had been diminished in my eyes, she dismissed him quickly without arguing anymore. However, she didn't impose any punishment on me. And her well-known reputation as a strict disciplinarian, feared by most of the pupils, forever disappeared from my mind. After this incident, she lost all authority in my eyes, and I was not afraid of her anymore. I knew that, if she again accused me unfairly, my father would defend me.

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1. See the chapter "The Keynote Speaker at the Teachers' Conference."
 2. Health resort with health rehabilitation facilities.
 3. See the chapter "Father Returns to Live with Us."
 4. See the chapter "The Keynote Speaker at the Teachers' Conference."



The Newspaper's Proofreader

As Remembered by Antonina G. Gladky

When I was in Moscow,¹ my husband went to the Slavyansk's Commissariat of People's Education to inquire about the availability of teaching positions for him for the next school year. Since they had his application on file from last summer for a position as a teacher of biology, chemistry, or science, he was in luck—there was an opening to teach science in the Russian Semilyetka, the Seven-Years School, and he accepted this position for the 1935–1936 school year.

At the same time, because my husband's application in *Narobras* had been on file from last year, they didn't check his political past at that time because there were no positions available. And this year they didn't do it either, probably believing that it had been done last year. So far it had been overlooked, and he didn't have to worry.

After several years of teaching adults at the Rabfak, where discipline was never a problem, my husband found teaching children of the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades very difficult. These were not like the obedient peasants' children he had taught in the village school. The town's children had no respect for teachers and disrupted lessons with pranks and misbehavior.

Right from the first days of teaching, the problem of discipline overwhelmed him. It was an unending battle with the pupils, who at that age were hard to control in the classroom. My husband was returning home very nervous, and he began again to have strong stomach pain as he had before in Kiselyevka. The doctor diagnosed it as a stomach ulcer and suggested he change his occupation. But to what? He was an experienced teacher with adult students and an effective administrator, but he couldn't find such positions here in Slavyansk.

He endured teaching there almost the whole 1935–1936 school

year in spite of the problems with students' discipline. And when he came home, he would lie in bed holding a hot bottle against his stomach to calm the pain. I was becoming very worried about his health. The doctor ordered him to remain on a bland diet, drink lots of milk, and drink a special brand of mineral water that was considered helpful for neutralizing stomach acid.

One day, at the market I encountered Maria Sergyeyevna Sydorenko, married name Litvinova. She was my sister Tanya's girlfriend from the old days when we all attended gymnasium, and she lived almost across the street from my father's home. She had remained to live with her second husband, her daughter Zoya, and her old mother in her mother's home on Kharkovsky Street. She had been working for many years as a clerk in the supplies room of the local printing house. It was located in the old Kotlyarov's printing house, where she and my sister Tanya had worked after graduating from the gymnasium.

I shared my concern with Maria Sergyeyevna about my husband's health. "The doctor suggested my husband change his work, but it is not so easy to change one's profession."

To my surprise, Maria Sergyeyevna asked me, "How is his knowledge of the written Ukrainian language? Would he be able to correct spelling? They are desperately looking for a good proofreader for our local newspaper that, as you know, is printed in Ukrainian."

"Well, he speaks, reads, and writes well in Ukrainian. I think he could do it. He taught for two years in the Ukrainian school in the village."

Then she warned, "The only problem for him could be that this work will be at night, when the newspaper is being printed."

I told her that I would mention this to my husband and he should decide if he feels that he could do this work.

When I mentioned this to my husband, he had a mixed reaction to it. On one side, he liked it, because it was quiet work, and he was confident about his knowledge of the language. On the other side, he was afraid that, to work for the Bolshevik newspaper, he probably would be checked and rechecked as a politically reliable person. We discussed if it was worth all this risk, and finally he decided to apply for the position. He reasoned, "If they are desperate to find somebody, maybe they won't be so thorough in checking my past."

The next day he went to the editorial office of the newspaper "Bilshovyk"² and asked if they were still looking for a proofreader. He was immediately led for an interview with the editor-in-chief, Bolshevik I. T. Mukhyn, who had already been advised by Maria Sergyeyevna about my husband's qualifications. He was hired on the spot. My husband gave his resignation as a teacher and immediately began his new employment at the newspaper's office.

Comrade Mukhyn told my husband, "Orest Mikhailovich, your responsibility will be to check grammar, the right Ukrainian spelling of words, and the correctness of sentences. You are not responsible for the content of the articles; we have another person—a censor—who is responsible for checking the political correctness of everything that is printed in the newspaper."

My husband found this work to be of his liking, and he felt very comfortable working at night; it didn't bother him at all.

As time passed, nobody asked him anything about his social status, or about his military registration, probably believing that the local *Narobras* had already checked him before as a teacher. It appeared that my husband had found an ideal place to work, where nobody was bothering him and nobody was interested in getting his job.

But for me, at the Teachers' Technicum, things were not becoming easier. During my second year of teaching there, the assistant director's captiousness toward me became worse. He was purposefully coming to the teachers' room when I was there, knowing well that I was talking with the other teachers in Russian. He would always sternly remind us, "Comrade teachers, speak in Ukrainian—don't forget that this is the Ukrainian Technicum!" Then he began to resort to trivial faultfinding about how I was teaching.

And finally, he found another way of giving me trouble; he investigated who my father was before the revolution. One day, I was summoned to the office of the Technicum's director, who was a Jew; his Ukrainian language was not as perfect as it could be, and he was glad that he could speak with me in Russian.

He told me, "Antonina Gavriylovna, it was brought to my attention by the assistant director that, when you applied for the teaching position here, you concealed the socio-economic background of your father, who before the revolution was a petty-

bourgeois, who owned a tailor shop, where he exploited the apprentices. And, in addition, he owned several houses!"

"My father, Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy, has lived in this town all of his life," I proudly replied. "He was and is a master tailor, and he continues to work from his home, as he did in the past. There was no need to conceal anything because everybody in this town knows this. The houses were built with money borrowed from the bank, and they were requisitioned by the Soviet government before he could repay the loan; my father never owned them outright. Therefore, there was nothing to hide about it. You may find out all the facts about my father's past without any difficulty."

The director obviously had relied on the words of his assistant director and hadn't investigated himself. He didn't question me further and dismissed me without commenting about it. He never bothered me again about this matter.

After this happened, the assistant director continued with more persistence to annoy me with his carping. And at the end of the school year I decided to try to find another teaching position in town. I inquired at the Slavyansk's Commissariat of People's Education about openings for the next school year in teaching Russian. As I expected, there were some positions available, and I was offered to teach Russian language and literature in the Ukrainian Seven-Years-School. I accepted this position for the 1936-1937 school year.

I resigned immediately from my teaching in the Teacher's Technicum. However, with my resignation, I lost my right to live in the Technicum teachers' apartments, and we began to look for a new place to live.

When I went to see my father and asked him if he had heard from some of his customers about apartments to rent, he said, "There is one good apartment in the home of your stepmother's brother, Dmytry Pyetrovich Boyko. He just finished his half of the newly built home and is looking for renters who would pay him the rent in advance; then he can finish the other apartment and make it ready for rent. If you have money to pay him in advance, you better go right away before he finds somebody else."

And my stepmother told me, "It is a good brick house that my brother just built. And next door in a smaller house our sister lives with her grown-up children and grandchildren. Tell my brother

that it was I and your father who told you about the apartment. He shall be happy to rent it to relatives, rather than to some strangers.”

We went to see it right away, and indeed we liked the place. The owner was also glad to rent it to someone he knew. It was a well-built house of brick, and our apartment had a separate entrance into a large kitchen, with one larger and one smaller room on each end of it. All woodwork, walls, and the nice wood floor were new and needed only to be painted. We could never find anything better than this. We especially liked that it was almost a relative of mine, and it gave us an additional incentive—the privacy of the place and the security of being with a family that we could trust.

In the back of all the houses on that side of the street, there was a big space with fruit and vegetable gardens that were back-to-back with the lots of the parallel street on the other side of the land. In the courtyard was a summer kitchen, if we wished to use it, and farther on were an earth cellar and an outhouse.

We moved to the new apartment as soon as it was ready. For my husband it was almost the same distance to walk to the printing house as before, but I had to walk quite a distance to the school, which was on the other end of town in the direction of Kurort. But the location was so nice, and it was much closer to Lyalya’s new school, which she had to start in the fall.

1. See the chapter “The Keynote Speaker at the Conference.”

2. Ukrainian spelling of Bolshevik.



The New Ten-Years-School in Slavyansk

By Olga Gladky Verro

On the first of September, 1936, I was starting the seventh grade and was transferred to the newly built secondary school¹ that was known as the Ten-Years-School² Number 15. Although the school had been planned for the increase in the number of pupils based on the estimated growth in the town population, when it was finally ready, there were not enough classrooms for all pupils enrolled in the seventh to tenth grades. Therefore, it was necessary to schedule classes in two shifts; the first shift was from half past seven o'clock in the morning until noon, and the second shift from one o'clock to half past five in the afternoon.

I was glad that my class was scheduled in the second shift, because I had a hard time getting up early in the morning after going to bed late at night. I usually did my homework after supper and then helped my mother correct her pupils' papers in Russian language, because my father could not help her anymore; he was working in the evening and at night as a proofreader in the local newspaper.³

On the first day of school, I was on my way right after lunch at noon. The school was located quite far from Kalinin Street, where we lived and, if I followed the streets, I needed more than twenty-five minutes to walk. To reduce the time, I opted to take a shortcut through the opening in the high wooden fence that was commonly used by dwellers on our street. I easily pushed aside the couple of boards that were loosely held only on top of the fence cross-board and carefully squeezed myself through the opening. And voilà, I found myself in the large courtyard that was shared by several buildings. Now I had only to walk across the courtyard to come out on Gogol Street, which led straight to the school.

As I walked on the trampled-down path, I saw a girl about my

age that came out of the old one-story brick building. She hurriedly walked toward the path and waited there until I arrived. We looked at each other and at our school portfolios we carried, and it became obvious to both of us that we were going to school.



Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky) in 7th grade of Ten-Years School. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, Fall 1937. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.

The girl timidly asked me, "Are you going to the second shift

in the new Ten-Years-School?"

I replied, "Yes. Are you enrolled there, too? Then let's walk, because I don't want to be late the first day."

"Yes," she confirmed, "I am in the seventh grade."

"Ah!" I said with surprise, "I am in the seventh grade, too. Maybe we will be in the same class."

"It's possible," replied the girl and added bashfully, "My name is Syma⁴ Shyrman. What is your name?"

"Olga Gladkaya,"⁵ I replied.

It took us a good fifteen minutes to walk at a fast pace to reach the school. It was enough time for us to get acquainted a little with each other. I liked Syma right away because she didn't put on airs, was friendly, and somewhat shy.

The school was a big, new three-story brick building built on the corner of the street, and it had a large courtyard with only a few young trees planted far back near the low wooden fence. We followed the other students and entered the schoolyard where there was a side entrance door.

Syma asked me, "What is that long wooden structure over there?"

I recognized right away what it was—such structures were in every courtyard of the newly built buildings in the coalminer's hamlet of Kyselyevka,⁶ where I lived before—and said, "That's the communal latrine. Could you read the signs on both sides?"

"Yes," she answered and read, "Boys. Girls."

Suddenly, our first impression about the new school became unpleasant. We were shocked by that unexpected sight of a wooden latrine erected over a deep pit in the schoolyard not far from the side entrance to the building. It stood there as a sore reminder of the Soviet accelerated construction shortcuts common in those days, when the installation of plumbing was left to be done sometime in the indefinite future.

Syma, who lived in the center of the old town, had never seen these big outhouses before, because the new buildings were built for the workers of the big factories located on the outskirts of the town. Instead, I was very familiar with that standard type of a latrine and explained to her about its internal details.

"Inside it is divided lengthwise in half by a wooden wall. On each side of that wall there is an elevated step with about a dozen round holes on the top board without any partitions for privacy."

Syma made a grimace and expressed her disgust, "Faugh!"

"You get used to it," I replied in a condescending way and asked her, "Could you imagine a race to run down and then back up the stairs to class to make it on time during the short recesses between lessons?"

She replied, "It depends on what floor our classroom is."

At the school office we found out that we indeed were in the same class and that our classroom was on the third floor in the wing of the building on the left side of the stairs. As we were climbing up the stairs, Syma told me, "You are right. It will be impossible for us to run to the courtyard the three flights of stairs during the short recesses. We could come down only during the main recess."

I added, "In case of emergency we could ask the teacher's permission to go down during the class."

"Not me—I would be ashamed to ask," Syma replied.

On the third floor we found our classroom. Some pupils were congregated in the hall, and some were standing or sitting inside. The classroom had three large windows, and there were three rows of pupils' desks; one row was placed against the wall with the windows, the other, in the middle, and the third, on the side where there was the door; a comfortable passage was left to the two bulletin boards on the wall. The teacher's desk was placed in front of the middle row; behind it was a long blackboard, and next to it, close to the door, was another bulletin board.

The pupils had already taken a few of the desks; some were sitting there, and some had just placed their portfolios on the desk of their choice. Syma told me that she had to sit in front of the room because she couldn't see well and needed to be close to the blackboard. The second desk in the middle row was free, and I agreed to sit with her there.

We looked around to find out if there was anyone that we knew from the sixth grade. Syma found some girls she knew from the other school and told me their names, adding, "However, I didn't have much to do with them before. Then she gestured toward a skinny girl with a child-like body and thin blond braids tied at the ends with small bows, "And that one is a loner." Then, without turning her head, she moved only her eyes in the direction of the three girls talking together. "And those are inseparable friends, and they rarely associate with anyone else."

I saw Fimka Zusmanovich,⁷ who was sitting toward the end of the third row, and told Syma that I had been with him in the same class in the fifth and sixth grade and that I knew that he was from a Jewish family.

"My family is Jewish, too," said Syma, "but we don't know his parents."

Then I pointed to the door and said, "In the hall I saw Olga Krasnaya and some other girls who were in my sixth-grade class. I really don't care about them because they belong to the same clique, and they gossip a lot." However, neither of us knew most of the other boys and girls.

After the bell, a very skinny teacher dressed in a loose and oversized knitted jacket of some indefinite drab color came into our classroom and presented herself. "My name is Anna Nikolayevna Shmulyevich. I will be the head teacher of your class and will take the attendance every morning. If anyone of you will be absent or late to school, you need to bring a note from your parents."

Then she briefly described some of her other duties as a head teacher. "I will also distribute your report cards, assign you to the neighborhood brigades, and will help you publish the class wall-newspaper. From time to time, I will place notices from the school administration on the bulletin board and will take care of other class matters." And she advised us that, if we had questions, we should always ask her first before going to the school office. Then she told us some of the rules of the new school.

After she finished describing her duties as a head teacher, she announced with pride, "I will also be your teacher of Russian language and literature." Finally, she told us to get up and form a column, beginning with those sitting on the desks closer to the door, and to follow her in an orderly manner for a tour of the new school.

On the third floor, there were only classrooms similar to ours. On the second floor, the classrooms were only in the two wings of the building, and there was a big hall that included the whole floor, starting right from the stairs to the opposite wall with many large windows. The hall was used for physical and military education classes during bad weather and also in the winter when it could not be done outside in the schoolyard. The hall also served as an assembly hall with a small stage on the right side and

piano standing in the corner near the window.

On the ground floor, there were the school offices. The school director was standing near her office door, and our head teacher introduced her to us very formally. “Pupils, meet Comrade Malikova, the Director of the new Ten-Years-School Number Fifteen.”

“Good day, pupils!” greeted the director. “I hope that you are proud to be in the new school.” And she made a sign to our head teacher to move along, because there was another class arriving to meet her. I was surprised that she was the same woman who was the director of the school I had attended last year. I told Syma, “I hope that she will not take revenge on me for last year’s incident—she summoned my father to complain about me laughing during the physical education exercises in the school’s courtyard. My father told her rather harshly that she unfairly singled me out for punishment when all pupils were laughing.”⁸

In the wing of the ground floor, there was a physical education exercise room equipped with a few standard items, such as parallel bars, a horse for gymnastic exercises in jumping and vaulting, and a multi-ladder grid fixed on the wall for climbing. In the same wing was a workshop equipped with workbenches and vises; there were shelves with basic woodworking and metalworking tools, such as files, planes, saws, drills, hammers, pliers, and screwdrivers.

I was surprised that there were no laboratories for physics or chemistry classes similar to the chemistry laboratory that my father had at the Rabfak in the hamlet of Kisyelyevka.⁹ Also, there was no cafeteria in the building. Our head teacher explained that we would not have a lunchtime recess, but only the fifteen-minute main recess—it would give us enough time to have a snack that we could eat in the classroom or in the hall. We could either bring something from home, or could run down on the street corner to the small wooden kiosk to buy something there.

When we returned to the classroom, the head teacher told us that we would stay through the school day in our classroom and that the teachers would come in for forty-five minutes to teach their subjects; there would be a five-minute recess between the lessons and the main recess of fifteen minutes between the third and fourth lesson. She explained that all pupils had to take the same subjects according to the standard curriculum for grades

seven through ten, as in all schools of the Soviet Union, which was mandated by the Central Commissariat of People's Education in Moscow. The textbooks in every subject were also standard, with the same content printed in Russian and then translated into all languages of the Soviet republics.

Syma and I didn't talk to anyone in our class and could not have an opinion about them. But, during the recesses between classes, we observed boys and girls and shared our impressions, mostly about their appearance. We noticed that all girls were thirteen to fourteen years old, and most were slender and of medium height; only a few were taller or shorter than the others; some were physically more developed than the others, and some still had a child-like figure, but all looked healthy. Most of the girls had braided hair, which was very popular at that time. Some girls had their hair parted in the center, some had it parted on one side, and some had it just combed back. Some had thin braids and others had thick braids; some had short, and some had medium-length braids; some tied the braids' ends with bows, and some had the braids, put around the head like a crown with a big bow at the back covering their neck; some just folded them at the back and secured them with the bows. Only a few girls had short hair.

Among the boys, there was more variety of body-build and height. A few boys were very tall and well-built; several were shorter than the average, but well-proportioned overall. Behind us in a desk intended for two pupils, sat one big, fat, and sluggish Jewish boy, Yasha Pevsner, whose name we learned right away because from the first day he behaved silly, clowning all the time. He was constantly reprimanded by the teachers.

On the first day, we also met some of our teachers, who explained to us the program and distributed the textbooks for the subjects they would be teaching. The use of the textbooks was free for the duration of the course, and we were advised to take good care of them, not to make any marks, because we had to return them at the end of the year for use by the next-year students. We were advised that if we damaged or didn't return the textbooks, we would have to pay for them. Notebooks, pencils, erasers, and pens we had to purchase ourselves, but the inkwells were inserted in the hole on top of the desk. We had only to refill them with ink when needed.

After the lesson in mathematics, the teacher, Anna Filipovna

Golovina, gave us homework right away to be done for the next day. Syma became upset and confessed to me, "I hate mathematics! I always have a hard time solving the problems. And this teacher gives us homework on the first day."

"But it is a very easy problem it's a review of last year's material," I replied. "Do you want me to help you?"

Syma smiled and timidly asked, "Would you really help me? Do you want to stop at my apartment right after school before going home?"

"I think it will be better for me to come after supper," I replied. "My mother would worry if I didn't come home right after school. We live so close to each other, and, if I take the shortcut through the fence opening, it will take me only a few minutes to walk."

We walked home together and shared our impressions about the first day of school. When we reached the big courtyard, Syma led me to the door of her apartment and said, "I will be waiting for you!"

"I will be there right after supper," I replied.

I was pleased to have found a nice girl of my age who lived close by and who could become my friend. I liked her right away, and I felt that Syma also wanted me to be her girlfriend. I told my mother about my newfound friend and that we'd agreed to sit at the same desk and walk to and from school together.

I also explained that Syma hated mathematics and that I'd offered to help her with the homework that our teacher gave us.

After supper I went to Syma's apartment, where I met her mother, father, and older sister Fanya. All three of them were very, very fat, and it was so strange for me to see that Syma was so skinny compared to the rest of her family. Her mother and father were much older than my parents. Her older sister had already graduated from the medical institute and was working as a doctor. But she was divorced, had a little son, and lived with her parents. Another sister was also studying somewhere in the medical institute.

Syma's mother began to question me about my family, but Syma didn't allow her to complete the inquiry and told her, "Don't worry—Lyalya is a nice girl from a good family. We have to do our homework in mathematics!" And she swiftly led me to the next room, where she had her bed and a small table on which we could do our homework. I had to explain to Syma very

patiently how to solve the problem, because she didn't have enough previous knowledge to be able to solve it.

After we finished our homework, Syma showed me the rest of their apartment, which had three rooms leading into each other. The first one was a kitchen, and all the family congregated there. From there the door led to the middle room and from there to the third room. All the rooms were full of old, good quality furniture tightly packed together because there was not enough space. When we finished, Syma's mother treated us to some sweets, and then Syma accompanied me to the fence. In saying goodbye to me, she said that tomorrow she would wait for me on the steps of her apartment and we would walk to school together.

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1. Additional recollections of former pupils by Maria Davidenko Pallotti, Serafima (Syma) Shyrman, and Katherine Birula.
 2. *Dyesyatilyetka*—Ten-Years-School, with grades seven to ten.
 3. See the chapter "The Newspaper's Proofreader."
 4. Nickname for Serafima.
 5. Russian spelling of the feminine surname of Gladky.
 6. See the chapter "Hamlet of Kisyelyevka."
 7. See the chapter "My Preteen Years in Slavyansk."
 8. See the chapter "My Preteen Years in Slavyansk."
 9. See the chapter "Hamlet of Kisyelyevka."



Teenager in Soviet School

By Olga Gladky Verro

On the second day of school,¹ Anna Nikolayevna Shmulyevich, the head teacher of our seventh-grade class,² assigned all pupils to the so-called pupils' brigades. It was something new that we didn't have in the lower grades.

Anna Nikolayevna explained that members of each brigade were expected to be a team working together—they were responsible for helping each other study in all subjects and, if needed, helping with homework. In addition, the teammates had a duty to keep all teammates from falling behind in their studies. In case of the absence of one of them from school, they had to ask the teachers in all subjects to give them the homework for the absent pupil, take it to the teammate's home, explain the assignments, and brief the student on the lessons taught that day. The teammates were also expected to make sure that nobody in their brigade was skipping, or was late to school and that all behaved well in class, in school, and after school. In short, everyone was responsible for all teammates in their brigade.

She asked the pupils to select their own teammates; those who remained unchosen she added to the brigades with pupils living in the same neighborhood, or more or less close to them. Of course, Syma and I selected each other; since we needed another teammate in our brigade, a boy named Kostya³ Syrota was added. He lived far from everybody—as far as the Shnurkovka School that I attended in the fifth grade and where my father had taught last year. Kostya was sitting all by himself at the last desk in the third row in the corner of the classroom near the wall.

On the large bulletin board, near the classroom entrance door, the teacher placed sheets of graph paper with the names of the pupils in each brigade. One of the teammates was responsible for keeping the monthly score of the attendance, grades, and behavior for each teammate. At the end of the month, the brigade that had more good grades, better attendance, and fewer behavior

problems, was awarded first place, followed by the brigades in second, third, fourth, and fifth places. Kostya volunteered to be the scorekeeper for our brigade, and Syma and I were glad to delegate to him this task.

Kostya Syrota was a pleasant, agreeable teammate, and, right from the beginning, we established a good relationship among the three of us. He was an intelligent boy and had a straightforward character. Kostya and I found out that, if there was any difficulty in homework, we could help each other in school before the bell for the first class. He lived quite far from us, and it was not necessary for him to do the homework with us, because I was taking care of helping Syma.

From then on, Syma and I would do our homework either in her home or mine. She really needed help in mathematics, and I was glad to help her. It gave me a great sense of satisfaction to explain the concepts that were hard for her to grasp, and I had to lead her through the reasoning involved in solving the problems. I discovered that teaching her was very natural for me, probably as a result of having spent a lot of time in my father's and my mother's classrooms and from observing them teaching.

In the seventh grade, Kostya had to come only once to my home, because I was absent for several days with a bad cold, and Syma was not capable of explaining the lessons to me. When Kostya arrived, my father was home, and, to everybody's surprise, they recognized each other. I found out that during the previous year he was in my father's biology class at the Shnurkovka School. And my father inadvertently called him by the last name Zaytsev. Kostya was quick in explaining to me that he changed his last name to his mother's name, Syrota, after his parents had divorced and he remained living with her. He said that this was the reason he decided to get transferred to the new school, where nobody knew him under his old name. Kostya asked me to keep his secret and not to tell anybody, not even Syma, about this. He told me also that my father was a very good teacher and he had high regard for him. And I felt that this episode reinforced his friendly rapport and respect for me.

By the time we were in the eighth grade, the three of us felt comfortable together and could trust each other because neither Kostya, nor Syma, nor I, belonged to the exclusive cliques that were constantly involved in gossiping and in criticizing the other

classmates. We didn't belong to the close groups, mostly all girls or all boys, who didn't associate much with the others, either. But most of all, Kostya and I had many common interests and recognized that we intellectually challenged, but didn't compete, with each other in our studies.

Syma fell right away madly in love with Kostya. He didn't mind being admired by Syma, but he was not taking it seriously, and she knew that he was not in love with her. But Kostya liked to innocently tease her about her tender feelings for him. During recess he would come close to her, smile, and say gently, "*Hi, Syelyedochka.*"⁴ Syma's face would become red as a boiled crawfish, and she would look around to see if anyone had heard it. But notwithstanding her embarrassment, she was pleased to have his attention and didn't complain about it even to me.

During the school year, all three of us shared opinions about our classmates and teachers. Syma disagreed with our opinions, because she disliked the teachers of subjects that were hard for her to learn. But Kostya and I agreed in our evaluations, because we both liked mathematics and physics, and were enthusiastic about those subjects and admired our teachers. They were superb teachers and knew how to challenge students in their lessons.

Anna Filipovna Golovina, the teacher of mathematics, was an excellent teacher. She was able to teach algebra, geometry, and trigonometry in such an appealing and interesting way that I could not help but to stay alert and listen to her lessons. I was surprised at how easy it was for me to understand all the concepts she was teaching. But she was strict in checking our assignments and would not allow the pupils to neglect them.

I remember that once I was absent from school, and she gave Syma the assignment for me, and I had to learn it from the textbook at home. I thought that tomorrow I could learn it in school when, as usual, someone would be asked by Anna Filipovna to explain it in front of the class on the blackboard, and I put the assignment in my Math book.

When I returned to school, I was immediately called to the blackboard to explain the geometrical theorem that I should have studied. So, I began to use the usual logic appropriate to support the theorem. I was going in circles writing the strings of equations, and somehow, after filling the whole board with my writings, was able to arrive at the same conclusion that could

have been done with only a few lines.

In the beginning, Anna Filipovna looked at me with a stern face, perceiving that I hadn't studied the lesson, but she patiently allowed me to do it, obviously curious about how I would solve the problem. Then, when finally I came to the end and had the right answer, she said in a deliberately strict manner, "You didn't study the lesson in the textbook, but I have to give you credit for arriving at the right answer. Now watch the other pupil to show how it should be done in a much shorter way."

Another excellent teacher was Leonid Yudin, who was able to fascinate the pupils with physics. Since our school had no laboratory to enrich the lessons, the blackboard was the only place where he was able to demonstrate the phenomena by drawing the whole experiment step-by-step, sometimes filling the whole space with the pictures and formulas to be learned.

He was a very young man with a full head of rusty-red hair and an open and expressive face. He possessed a magnetic personality that appealed to the teenagers, both boys and girls, and he was full of enthusiasm for the subject he was teaching.

Kostya and I loved his lessons, because he was able to teach them in a very interesting way and entice the curiosity of his pupils. He was always friendly and had an almost comradely way of talking to the pupils; at the same time, he demanded that we learn his subject and had a special way of rewarding us with words for work well done and for the right answers to his questions. But Syma was not very fond of him because physics was very hard for her to understand, and I had to help her in this subject, too.

Everybody loved the teacher of German language, Emma Ferdinandovna. She was a very sweet and pleasant young woman and had a gentle and patient way of teaching without being strict. Most of the pupils tried hard to do their best just to please her. She was tall, very pretty, and was always dressed simply, but elegantly, and the girls admired her for that.

Anna Nikolayevna Shmulyevich was also a good teacher of Russian language and literature. She was very skinny and didn't pay any attention to her appearance. She was always dressed in loose, drab clothing and unmatched colors. Her bigger problem was that she was rather nervous and had little patience with the pupils. For some unknown reason, pupils misnamed her, and it

became common to call her—of course, behind her back—*Klizmochka*, which means “the little enema.” Sometimes her lessons didn’t appeal to me, because she was demanding that I learn the grammar rules, which I felt I didn’t need to learn, because I always wrote very well without mistakes.

Once, she admonished me for my lack of effort in this and told me, “I am surprised that you write so remarkably correct in Russian, but you don’t know many of the grammar rules.”

I answered her, “I have corrected so many students’ dictation papers for my mother’s Russian classes that I know spelling and punctuation by heart. And if I am writing grammatically without errors, why should I learn the rules? I am not planning to be a teacher of Russian language.”

She replied, “Knowing the grammar would help you in learning foreign languages.” And she was correct—I had to learn the grammar rules that were needed in studying German.

The chemistry teacher was the director of our school, Comrade Malikova. She was an authoritarian in teaching and in her treatment of the pupils, and I couldn’t stand her for this. Besides, she did not forget my father’s lecturing her when she singled me out for punishment when the whole class was laughing when we were still in the old school building; she treated me more strictly than the other students. We had to endure her long writings of the formulas on the blackboard that we had to copy in our notebooks and memorize. I didn’t have difficulty learning inorganic chemistry, as some of the others did. I had the advantage of being familiar with many facets of chemistry from my father’s classes and laboratory at the Rabfak in Kisyelyevka and was familiar with the Mendeleev’s Periodic Table of Elements. But for many pupils, including my friend Syma, it was like the Chinese language, and I had to coach her in that subject, too.

The teacher of Ukrainian language and literature was not too strict, and he put much emphasis on literature and Ukrainian history. I liked to listen to his expressive readings in class of poetry by one of the best Ukrainian poets, Taras Shevchenko.

For some reason, we also studied in Ukrainian some of the classic Greek literature, such as Homer’s “Iliad,” but I couldn’t savor it in Ukrainian translation—it sounded very strange.

The history teacher was very boring. He assigned to read at home the chapters from the history textbook ahead of time and

then discussed them in class. He was always making sure that we didn't deviate from the ideas and words as they were written in the textbook and constantly reminded us to look back in the textbook for the right answer. He was especially strict in enforcing this when we studied the pre-revolutionary history of Russia, where the textbook emphasized the exploitation of the poor by the rich—the peasants by the landowners. He was very particular in demanding the “right answers” when we studied the events of the Russian revolution, where the textbook was proclaiming the Bolsheviks' victory over the many “enemies of the working class,” such as the old tsarist-era landowners, capitalists, and the White Army. It seemed the teacher was afraid to introduce any idea that was not included in the textbook for fear of not being politically correct, and the safe way for him was to follow the text that was dictated by the Central Commissariat of People's Education in Moscow.

The geography teacher also taught geology and astronomy, subjects that he was able to present with maps and drawings. He had the ability to present the material in a way that interested the pupils. I became involved to such a degree that I began to consider becoming a geologist or an astronomer. I used to observe the sky at night and learned to recognize some constellations and the major stars.

The biology teacher also relied strongly on the textbook for its illustrations, and there was a lot of memorizing involved, but I had several books on this subject in my father's collection and was supplementing what I learned in class with my readings; the teacher was pleased with my performance.

Then there were physical education and military training teachers, and the workshop teacher. All these subjects, being non-academic, gave us some relaxation and time away from the classroom that all pupils were glad to have.

In physical education, we did mostly gymnastic exercises with the whole group and some training on the equipment. For the non-athletically inclined students, there was not much emphasis on perfection in performance, and only those who were interested were allowed extra practice on the equipment. We were not evaluated with grades in this subject, and only our attendance was required to have “passed” the course.

The military training included learning to use gas masks and

marching in the courtyard, learning the commands, and listening to some pep talks about the virtues of defending the Motherland from capitalist aggression and about military service duty.

I liked the workshop, where we worked on simple tasks, mostly to learn how to use the various tools available there. We never worked on complete projects that required long periods of time—there were neither the supplies nor the time allotted to work on them. We usually were given simple assignments such as making wooden or metal shapes, drilling holes, planing, filing, using a screwdriver attaching screws, a hammer for nailing pieces together, or a saw for cutting wooden shapes. Although attendance at workshop was compulsory, we were not evaluated with grades—just “passed” the course.

The art teacher was mostly interested in teaching us how to use drafting tools and introduced us to the three-dimensional design of geometric shapes and sketching, rather than drawing pictures or learning art principles and colors.

There were obligatory assemblies in the big hall to celebrate all communists’ commemorative days such as, The International Workers Solidarity Day—May 1st; The October Revolution Day—November 7th; The International Woman’s Day—March 8th; The Red Army Day—February 23rd; and some other minor Bolsheviks’ victories days. Usually, the pupils had to listen to the speeches full of slogans proclaiming the virtues of the Communist-Bolshevik Party and concluded with the adulation of the party and its leader: “Long live the Communist Party!” “Long live our great leader and our dear Father Stalin!”

Then there was a New Year’s celebration, with the traditional decorated pine tree and Grandfather Frost⁵ distributing gifts, all concepts borrowed by the communists from the old religious holiday of Christmas that had been abolished, along with all other Christian holidays.

But clandestinely, many families were celebrating both Christmas and Easter, as did my grandfather and grandmother, who continued with the tradition and invited my parents and me to share those holidays with them. We were very careful not to make it known to anybody that we were going there. As an educator, my mother was expected to teach her pupils the evils of religion and the communist doctrine slogan: “Religion is the opiate of the people.” Therefore, celebrating these holidays could

have meant her dismissal from the school. To be sure that I didn't inadvertently tell something to someone about religion, my mother didn't teach me anything about the religious meanings of these holidays. She simply explained that these were the old-fashioned, traditional holidays, which, for my very religious grandfather, were very important to celebrate and that we should not disappoint him by not accepting his invitations. But I was always happy to be invited because I liked the special food and the sweets prepared by my grandmother. However, I learned that these celebrations were like a big family secret about which I should not talk with anyone.

It was during the school year 1937–1938, that I began to have difficulty seeing what was written on the blackboard, and my mother insisted on taking me to the eye doctor, who prescribed eyeglasses for me. At that time, it was considered a handicap for a young girl to wear glasses, and I had to endure being called “four-eyed” by the malicious boys from the other classes in school. But the boys in our class didn't bother me. On the contrary, Kostya told me that the eyeglasses made me look very distinguished, and the opinion of a boy who was my friend and who was always sincere with me made me feel good right away, so I was not ashamed to wear them.

In our class were two cousins, Musya⁶ Davidenko and Lyena⁷ Tarasenko, who sat together in the first row next to the windows. They lived on the side of town beyond the big bazaar square in the homes their parents had built, next to each other. Everybody considered them to be inseparable because they also walked to and from school together.

Musya was very pretty, with a gentle round face, small well-shaped mouth and nose, puffy rosy cheeks, and smiling brown eyes. She had light chestnut-brown hair parted on one side and braids placed around her head. She had a very vivacious and pleasant personality and was always friendly with everybody, but it was obvious that her cousin Lyena influenced her a lot.

Lyena didn't resemble her cousin Musya at all, although she was pretty in her own way. She had an oval face with prominent cheekbones and fair complexion. Her big blue eyes were remarkably clear but were cold as icicles. Her wheat-blond hair was parted in the middle and plaited in two thick braids that she wore hanging down. Lyena was always very serious and looked

at others with a calm indifference that didn't promote confidence with the other pupils, girls or boys.

Both Musya and Lyena were very good students in all subjects but, while Musya was modest about her intelligence and excellent grades, Lyena was always proud of being smart.

It was in the eighth-grade class that one very strange case happened in our class. There was a girl by the name of Sasha⁸, who sat in the middle row a few desks from the front of the room. Sasha was tall, healthy, with a somewhat athletic body build. She combed her blond hair smoothly toward the back and plaited it in one single long, thick braid that resembled a snake that slid along her back or shoulders with each movement of her head. Her large blue eyes were proportioned to her oblong face with strongly prominent cheekbones and were complemented by her fair complexion. She was a good student in Russian and Ukrainian Literature and wrote poetry for various occasions to be included in our class wall-newspaper.

Sometime toward the end of the school year, Sasha suddenly began to write poetry about her love for Musya. She was prolific in her writing and every day presented one new poem, desperately trying to gain Musya's affection. Musya was embarrassed to be the object of such admiration and tried to discourage Sasha, who responded with a new wave of poetry. Sasha became more aggressive and was not at all careful in hiding her admiration for Musya from the other pupils in the class—very quickly it became well known to everybody. The rumors began to spread that Sasha was half-girl and half-boy, and someone invented a short song with an easy tune that began with such words as: "Akh, Sashka is a boy..." and this placed her in a very awkward situation. She avoided talking with anyone in class and barely finished the final exams.

At the end of the school year after the eighth grade, she immediately left town. The rumors were that she had moved to Moscow, cut short her beautiful hair, had a male haircut, dressed herself in male clothing and enrolled there in a Technicum⁹ as a boy.

This incident with Sasha was an introduction for our pupils to the aberrations of nature and to one of the mysteries of sex. Syma and I exchanged what we heard from the others on this subject, but it was too embarrassing to discuss it with Kostya, and we

avoided conversation with him on this subject.

During the school vacation in the summer, Syma and I took Vyetka to Slavyansk Kurort to splash in the Salty Lake and to sunbathe on the sandy beach, except for those days that I was scheduled for the mud therapy for my face that I took every summer.¹⁰ On some evenings we went to Soborny Square, which now was called Lenin's Square, to see a movie in the former church building that had been transformed to a club soon after the Soviet authorities came to power and now remodeled as a movie theater. We liked to see the American comic movies with Charlie Chaplin or with Stanley and Ollie, the only foreign films that were shown in the Soviet Union at that time.

On some evenings, we would just sit on the steps to Syma's apartment and sing. Although neither Syma nor I had good voices and both were tone-deaf, we both enjoyed singing mostly the old, sad Russian or Ukrainian folk songs, such as: "*Troyka*,"¹¹ "*Volga, Volga*,"¹² "*Ekh, Ukhnyem*,"¹³ "*The High Mountain*,"¹⁴ "*Boys, Unharness the Horses*,"¹⁵ "*Oy, Chubchyky Da Nye Kuchery*,"¹⁶ the easy and lively "*Kalinka-Malinka*," and "*Polyushko-polye*." We liked also to sing the song from the movie "*The Children of Captain Grant*"¹⁷ that had the first words "*Captain, Captain, smile please, because the smile is the flag of the ship...*" Soviet patriotic songs made up only a small part of our repertoire, and we rarely sang them. For some reason, they did not appeal to us, neither with their words nor with their melodies.

In 1938, my Aunt Nyusya wrote to my mother that there was in Kharkov a very well-known neurologist who was performing nerve transplants, and she suggested that we come for a consultation to find out if he could improve the nerve function on the left side of my face. She agreed to make an appointment during the summer school vacation. Thus, my mother and I traveled to Kharkov. My mother also wanted to visit her sister, who had a vacation after one of the expeditions of the medical team in the Asian part of the Soviet Union.¹⁸

The doctor took the history of my facial paralysis and examined me very carefully. He found that I had recovered from the Bell's palsy very well and that all the cures that my parents tried through the years had been very effective. He said that the nerve transplant at that time was only an experimental procedure that could have unpredictable results, and with the progress I had

already made, it was not advisable. He suggested continuing with the hot-mud therapy that had such beneficial effect on some of the nerves controlling the mouth muscles, which, in his opinion, might improve even more with time. But the nerve that controlled the left eyebrow probably would not regain its functions. His advice was to keep ourselves informed on the progress that nerve transplant operations made in the future, and if it ever became a successful procedure, to come and see him or any other neurologist at that time.

While we were in Kharkov, we went to the store that was commonly called *Lux Magazine*. Such types of stores were found only in some major cities of the Soviet Union. There, at the very inflated prices compared to those in the common government stores, one could find all kinds of merchandise. At that time, I needed shoes for the fall, and we were not able to find them in our town stores. Here we found a very nice pair of black shoes, but when I tried them on, they were very narrow for my feet, but still I put them on and took a few steps. The store didn't have another pair that would fit me better, and we decided that maybe they would stretch by wearing them. Regrettably, even the shoe repairman was not able to stretch them, and I suffered the whole season wearing them.

During the years of 1938 and 1939, many events occurred in our life at home and in my life in school. These events influenced the changes in our family and in school, as well as in my relationship with my friends.

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1. Additional recollections of former pupils: Maria Davidenko Pallotti, Serafima Shyrman, and Katherine Birula.
 2. See the chapter "The Ten-Years-School in Slavyansk."
 3. Nickname for Konstantin.
 4. The mocking nickname "a Little Herring" that somebody gave to Syma, because she was very skinny.
 5. Santa Claus.
 6. Nickname for Maria.
 7. Nickname for Yelena.
 8. Nickname for Alexandra.

9. Students were admitted to Technicum after completing the eighth grade.
10. See the chapter "Return to My Hometown of Slavyansk."
11. Russian folk song that begins with the words "*Odnovuchno zvyenit kolokolchik...*"
12. Russian folk song about folk hero Yemelyan Pugachev.
13. A song about the peasants pulling the barge on the River Volga.
14. Ukrainian folk song that begins with the words "*Stoit gora vysokaya...*"
15. Ukrainian folk song that begins with the words "*Raspryahaite khlopzy koney...*"
16. Humorous Ukrainian song about the girl who had a hard time selecting a boy based on his haircut.
17. A song from the movie based on the story from the book "Captain Grant" by Jules Verne.
18. See the chapters "Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria Outbreak" and "Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya."



Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy

*As Remembered by Orest M. Gladky, Antonina G. Gladky,
and Yelena I. Berezhnaya Mikailova*

Tonya's younger brother, Ivan,¹ like his brother Alexander and like many other young men during the civil war, was a volunteer in the White Army. He served in one of the units of General Vranghel on the Southern front fighting the Reds. He was wounded and was placed in a military hospital. Before Ivan's wounds were healed, the Red Army division overran the hospital. When he had completely recuperated, the Red commander gave him a discharge from the hospital with the inscription on the document: *Vrangelyevets*.²

This word became his bad omen for the rest of his life. Having such an inscription in his document, Ivan decided not to return home immediately. He stopped in a village where he found a place to stay and work for a wealthy farmer who also had a very beautiful daughter for whom he wanted to find a husband. Well, Ivan married the farmer's daughter and remained living with the farmer's family and worked for him. However, after one year of hard work in the fields, Ivan understood that this life was not for him and that his young wife, although very pretty, was empty-headed and vain; he grew tired of her. The marriage was short-lived, and he decided to go home. One day he collected his few belongings in a bundle and left the village, taking the train going to Slavyansk from the nearest station.

When Ivan returned to Slavyansk, he learned the sad news that his brother, Alexander, his mother, and sister, Olga, had died. Other news was that his father had lost his homes, remarried, and was living in his new wife's home with the youngest son, Petya. The good news was that his older brother, Nikolay, was living with his family in his hometown and working in the Town Soviet office in the Department of Town Communal Property.

Therefore, Ivan found a room and enrolled in a short course in bookkeeping. At the completion of the course, his brother Nikolay found employment for Ivan as a bookkeeper in his office.



Ivan (Vanya) Gavriylovich Berezhnoy. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1936–1937.

Ivan was an attractive young man, very much resembling his father, although he was taller. He had his father's oblong face, dark wavy hair, brown eyes, and tan complexion. He had a likable and jovial personality and made friends easily. Ivan liked to play billiards and was a very skillful billiard player; and this hobby occupied all his free time. In the evenings one could always

find him in a club having a good time in the company of young men and women, and he played late, into the wee hours of the morning.

Soon after arriving in Slavyansk, Ivan met Maria Fyedorovna Dyeryughina. She was a daughter of a former landowner, Fyedor Grigoryevich Dyeryughin, whose origins were from a rich landowner's and timber-merchant's family. He was married twice. With his first wife, who was also from a rich landowner's family, he had a daughter by the name Nina. When his first wife died, he married Yelena Aghyevyevna Kulakova, who was from a poor family living in the town of Isyum. They also had a daughter, Maria, whom they used to call Musya and who'd been born in Isyum. They gave her a good education, appropriate for a girl from a rich landowner's family.

Fyedor Grigoryevich Dyeryughin lived a dissipated life. He liked to drive around in a carriage or a sled harnessed three horses abreast, called a *troika*, and to have a good time frequenting good restaurants in the company of women. After three years of enduring her husband's follies, his second wife reneged on her married life and didn't admit her husband to her bedroom any more.

After the revolution, the Soviet government had dispossessed Fyedor Grigoryevich Dyeryughin of his land, property, and riches. He and his wife Yelena took up residency in the town of Isyum. He remained completely ill-equipped for life; without any means of support, he and his wife suffered privation and poverty for the rest of their lives.

Their daughter, Maria Fyedorovna, had attended the secretarial courses before her father was dispossessed. She had furnished her room in town with some of the family's furniture, bedding, and lots of decorative heirlooms. After completing her studies, she remained in the town of Slavyansk and was appreciated as a very good secretary in the offices where she worked.

Maria Fyedorovna was a pleasant, good-mannered, and educated young woman. Although she was on the plump side, she had beautiful facial features, which she enhanced with makeup unusual for women in those times. She also had a full crown of well-groomed, wavy, light-brown hair. She was always well dressed and adorned herself with jewelry. Most of her outfits

were made over by a dressmaker into fashionable clothes from the vintage clothes of best-quality fabrics not found any longer on the market in those days. She wore high-heel shoes and fine silk stockings, all remaining from the good old times, when her family lived well, before the revolution.

She lived in one large room, furnished with the only remaining possessions from her native home that belonged to her rich family, which she had received when she attended the secretarial courses. The room was full of good, vintage furniture packed close together to fit it all in and leave space for a stove and dining table. A lot of knick-knacks, such as statuettes, vases, and china were placed everywhere. In one corner of the room stood a large bed covered with a heavy bedspread and a pile of plump goose-feather pillows. An étagère full of books stood near her bed, and she was constantly reading.

After a short courtship, Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy and Maria Fyedorovna Dyeryughina got married, and they lived in her room. In the beginning everything looked good for them. Vanya and Musya, as they called each other affectionately, both worked and had enough to live comfortably for those days.

Musya liked to eat well and, although she'd been brought up in a landowner's family, where there was a cook who prepared their food, she managed quite well to do her best in cooking. For some reason, she cooked wearing her good clothes, without ever putting on an apron, though she would change her high-heel shoes and put on her slippers. What she hated most was to clean up after the meal and to tidy up the room. After a full day of work, she liked to lie down and relax, reading one of her favorite books. Vanya had to get used to seeing a pile of dirty dishes left to be washed until the next day and to have dust left for days on the furniture and on the knick-knacks.

Ivan, like all young men, had to have a military card and military registration in the local GPU. Knowing that the only document about his whereabouts during the civil war had that word *vrangelyevets* written on it, he procrastinated with the registration as long as he could. But the office manager insisted, "You know very well that all young men have to have a military card and have to be registered. Out of respect for your brother Nikolay, I didn't rush you, waiting until you did it yourself. But now my superiors have checked your records and are insisting

that I make you comply. If you don't register, we have to fire you." Well, Ivan went to the GPU and got registered. And on his military card on the line where it was stated "previous military service," it was marked in distinct letters *Vrangel'yevets* (a veteran of the White Army under General Wrangel.)

As soon as he presented his military card to the manager, he told him that they couldn't employ former *byelogvardyeyets*³ in the office of the Town Soviet. Ivan came home all upset about losing his work, but Musya calmed him down, reassuring him that she had good employment and there was no big worry about how they would live while he looked for another place to work.

"After all," she reasoned, "Town Soviet is choosier about the political purity of people who work there. In other offices, this might not be so important."

In fact, since there was at that time a shortage of qualified bookkeepers, Ivan very soon found another place of employment. They did not ask right away to show them his military card, and Ivan certainly did not volunteer to show it to them. But after several months, the administration asked about his military registration, and the same happened again. The manager told him, "Ivan Gavriylovich, I like you, and I know your father and respect him... Your work is excellent... But you know how it is in these difficult times... I will put myself in trouble with the authorities if they find out that I employ *byelogvardyeyets*. Believe me, there is nothing personal against you."

This time, Ivan decided to change towns and try his fortune elsewhere. He would visit with his wife on his days off and work in the surrounding towns, using the same tactic of waiting to show his military registration for as long as possible. And he changed his place of employment many times.

Then it came time to register for elections for the Soviet delegates, and Ivan had to register as a town resident and to show to the authorities his military card. As a former *byelogvardyeyets*, Ivan was deprived of his civil rights, or as it was coined at that time, he became a *lishenyets*. This added to his difficulties in seeking employment, since now everywhere they were also requesting the resident registration documents. Ivan decided to try looking for employment somewhere very far from his hometown, hoping that this would help cover up his tracks. Ivan and Musya moved to the town of Stalino, formerly Yuzovka,

where both found employment.

There on May 4, 1936, was born their daughter Yelena, but affectionately they called her Lena, Lenchka, or Lyalya. Musya found a woman to look after her daughter, and she continued to work. However, after Ivan again lost his job for the same reasons as before, Musya decided to return to Slavyansk with her daughter. She became the major breadwinner in the family since Vanya had to constantly change jobs.

Vanya traveled for several years, returning between jobs to visit with his wife and small daughter. This wandering life was taking its toll on him, and to forget his troubles, he turned to drinking. For some time during his visits home, he was able to keep himself away from vodka. Then things got worse, and he was no longer able to control his drinking.

His daughter Yelena remembered very vividly one episode that remained imprinted in her mind.⁴ It happened when she was about four years old. She was happily playing in the courtyard with the neighbors' children when she heard somebody screaming, "Lena, your father is drunk, and he is crawling near the outhouse and scattering candies around!" Although she was very young, she became ashamed of her father, ran inside their one-room apartment, and hid herself under the table. Then she saw her father crawling through the door into the room. He was uttering loud, senseless, but obviously menacing phrases, and screaming, threatening somebody. His wife Musya got scared, grabbed Lena in her arms, and ran away to the courtyard. They returned when Vanya fell asleep on the floor.

One summer⁵ during her vacation, Musya went with her daughter to visit her parents in Isyum. While she was away, Ivan came home after being dismissed from another job. After a few days Musya unexpectedly returned home, leaving her daughter with her mother. She found her husband in a terrible state and didn't know what to do with him.

She ran to the only place where someone could help her, to her sister-in-law Tonya's house nearby, just across the railroad tracks on Zhelesnodorozhnaya Street. Crying, she implored, "For God's sake, Tonya, Orest Mikhailovich, come and help me! I have just returned home. I cannot recognize my room. Vanya is sitting there, drinking... On the table are several empty and full bottles of vodka..."

Orest said, "Tonya, I will go to see what is happening to your brother. You women stay here and wait until I return."

Orest found their one-room apartment in complete chaos—pillows and bedspread on the floor, chairs in disarray or upside down, books scattered everywhere, and his brother-in-law, Vanya, sitting at the table full of empty bottles and one still half-full, drinking vodka.

"Vanya, my dear brother, what are you doing?" he asked.

"Dear Or-rest, I am... dr-r-rink-k-ing," he replied.

"I can see it, but why?"

"Don't you worr-ry... I have... al-l-l-most fi-i-i-ni-shed... My w-w-wife has re tur-r-rned home so-o-ner then I ex-p-p-pected," he answered, slurring syllables as a drunken man who has lost control of his speech.

"But why, Vanya? What happened?"

"Nothing new... e-ev-v-very as it was before, my dear br-rother, Orest." And after a short pause he continued, "It's-s good... that she didn't br-r-ring with her our daughter... It... wou-u-uld have been a sha-a-a-me, to... s-s-e-e me in such s-s-state, she wou-u-uldn't under-r-r-stand. But you... should."

He stated the last words with tears in his eyes and, covering them with his hands, dropped his head on the table.

When he recovered from his desperate thoughts, he raised his head, supporting it under his chin with the palms of both hands and elbows securely placed on the table. Then he continued to explain his actions with a question, "What has one to do when there is no place to escape? Everywhere I go, they fire me." Supporting his chin helped him to control the slur in his speech.

Orest told him very cautiously, "But you have a job."

"A job?!" he interrupted in a loud voice and smiled bitterly. "That's why I stay away from my family, to keep them far from my troubles. There is no work for me anywhere!"

"What do you mean, 'anywhere?'"

Vanya silently took a wallet out of his pocket and pulled out his military and voter registration cards. "To you, dear brother, I can show it, to all the others, I can't..."

Musya, who had entered the room and was observing in silence until now, interrupted, "What are you doing, Vanya? You cannot show such papers to anybody!"

"Musya, I know who I am talking to... I haven't lost my brains

in vodka... Don't you worry—I never show them to strangers." Then he opened the small gray military card and pointed at the line, "Read here. What does it say?"

Orest read aloud, "*Vrangelyevets*."

"Yes, yes, dear brother, you read it right, *vrangelyevets*! Nothing else! That's enough to make me drink... You should excuse me, but my brain is working... sa-tis-fac-tor-r-rily... You see, during any year as *vrangelyevets* I have to change four and many times up to five times my place of work. And every year or two I have to change my geographical location. From Caucasus to Siberia, I tried them all..."

"But nobody is touching you, I mean, you are free?" Orest asked him almost reassuring that he was safe.

"Thank God, until now I was able to change jobs so quickly that nobody bothered to follow up on my whereabouts. But... you know, sometimes I really think that it would have been probably better if they took me and shot me..."

"Vanya! What are you saying?!" exclaimed Musya, clasping her hands.

Vanya looked at her and asked, "Where do I have to go?" Then he turned to his brother-in-law and said, "Listen, Orest, they hire me, I work hard. They are pleased with me. I wait as long as I can to register for military service. So far everything is fine. But after more than two or three months one cannot wait... There is always somebody who will remind you, 'And when will you, dear comrade, get registered? It's time to do it... Please, don't procrastinate any longer.' Well enough, I go and register. They don't say anything... But... when you return to work, that's the end... That's how it has been all my life. Now, dear brother, you know why I am drinking... And probably, I am not the only one..."

"But you have a family, Vanya," Orest tried to reason with him.

"It's my unintentional sin," answered Ivan with a deep sigh. "I know now that I shouldn't have got married... It was not a mistake... I didn't know what it was, this 'workers and peasants' dictatorship. Well, it is better to say that I thought I knew... That's why I was *vrangelyevets*... But I didn't expect that they would continue their vendetta for the duration of my terrestrial life!"

"Why don't you lose your military card?" Orest tried to

suggest to the desperate Vanya.

"I did, but it was useless... They asked me to request a new one from my previous place of registration. And it started all over again..." And he explained, "That's why I drink... And will continue to drink," he said hopelessly.

Then looking at his wife with pity, he added, "And you Musya, don't regret it if I don't return here anymore... You see, I can be neither a husband for you, nor a father for our daughter. You have to leave me alone, I am worse than plague-stricken."

Vanya poured a full glass of vodka, drank it in one gulp, took a piece of bread, smelled and salted it, and put it in his mouth. "That's better," he commented, stroking the bottle affectionately.

Then he looked again at Musya and said, "You better leave me alone! *'Neither tears nor kisses...'*" he recited a phrase from a popular song. "I shall be a stranger for you, and you shall be strangers for me. You better leave me to suffer alone..." And he suddenly dropped heavily his whole upper body on the table in semi-consciousness. I understood that at that point neither discussions nor persuasions could serve any purpose. Musya made a sign to Orest to go outside. And he promised to stop by tomorrow, when Vanya had sobered up.

The next day Orest came to see Vanya early in the afternoon, when Musya was at work and he was alone. Ivan was lying in bed, recuperating from yesterday's drinking bout. Orest noticed that he had aged a lot, looked thin and under-nourished, a sign that alcohol was taking a toll on his body. Vanya was embarrassed about his behavior and told me that he was tired of his migratory way of life and, in trying to justify himself, he engaged in a long monologue explaining what was happening to him.⁶

"I have never been a drunkard before, and I never had drinking bouts. But the last several years were dreadful for me, and I started to drink. And I was drinking so much that probably never in my life could happen it again. To tell you the truth, I never was drawn to vodka; on the contrary, vodka always disgusted me. But I was intentionally drinking just to forget myself, my loved ones, and everything around me. I was drinking until I would lose my consciousness.

"Yes, I was drinking because after caring so passionately for my motherland during my youth, I have been forced now to hate

what they have done to it... I was drinking because all my young years I gave to Russia, which I loved like my mother, my sister, my bride. For that love I sacrificed the best years of my life by volunteering in the White Army... And now... Now I have to forget all of it, my love, my joy, my happiness and my Russia... Now I am punished for it by those devil's Soviets. That's why I am forced to hate! Can you understand this?"

He looked at his brother-in-law and said,⁷ "Listen one more time: 'I am forced to hate!' But hate is not in my nature. It was hard for me to hate, and I suffered. Every time I suffered I found one solution to alleviate it—vodka.

"I hated vodka, but I was drinking it. I looked at it with disgust, but swallowed it like quinine, like castor oil. But I swallowed it because for some time after that, I was able to forget everything around me. I was transformed into a 'thing.' And then I couldn't perceive anything outside of me, neither the evil of the Bolsheviks' system, nor the injustice inflicted by it every day on me and on other people's lives, nor my soul's pains, nor the sadness in my heart. I was becoming an object, about which one could say without regret, *'Without heart, without soul, because he has dissolved his life in alcohol!'*

"During that time God's world grew dark, and I didn't feel alive. I felt then like I was between life and death... But it wasn't a state of bliss, like many could imagine my state of inebriation. No, it was a state of an inanimate, talking doll capable of making sounds of a few words with simple meaning and able to open and close eyes. When I was in this state, I felt like someone was placing me in a cardboard box and was hiding me in a big trunk or wardrobe, where the smell of naphthalene, like an anesthesia, was putting me completely asleep." Ivan stopped and looked at me shaking his head.

Then he began again to talk in short phrases, pausing between them. "Yes, I drink... I hate vodka, I look at it with disgust... I look with disdain at drunkards... But I drink. Now you know why—to forget the present-day reality of life... To forget this crazy place called the Soviet Union... To forget not only my small misfortune—which the Almighty had protected to become even worse so far—but to forget this horror that has struck all the people in my country... I cannot fight this evil power; I don't have the strength... And I drink to forget my helplessness... Until now,

I had hoped that things would change one day. It's not my fault that this hope deceived me... And it deceived not only me, but many like me..."

After pouring all his bitterness out of his soul, Ivan couldn't continue his monologue. Exhausted, he abandoned his arms alongside his skinny body.

Orest felt that Ivan was waiting for him to give him absolution and said, "Dear brother, I understand all your frustrations—I suffer as much as you are suffering—I have nothing to add to what you have said. The only difference between you and me is that I keep away from vodka." He told him a few words of support, a few suggestions on how to cope with the situation, but all this was of little help for Ivan. And Orest left him lying in bed to recuperate from two days of intoxication.

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1. The younger brother of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky.
 2. The name coined by the Bolsheviks for the former volunteers in the White Army who fought them under the command of General Vrangeli.
 3. Former White Guard, a generalized name coined by the Bolsheviks for all who served in the White Army.
 4. As recounted by Yelena Ivanovna Berezhnaya Mikailova, daughter of Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy, by phone, trans. and ed. Olga Gladky Verro, 1998.
 5. Selected passages from Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.), "*Vrangelyevets*" (in Russian), *Vo ymya chego?*, MS, TS, 1951, trans. and ed. by Olga Gladky Verro, 1993. (Author added more information and directed the translator to change the fictitious names to the real names of the people in the story. Fictitious names in the original version were used to conceal and protect the true identity of living persons from NKVD persecutions in the Soviet Union). Also published in different form as: Orest M. Gladky (O. Mikhailov, pseud.), "*Vrangelyevets*" (in Russian), newsp. *Rossia*, No. 4900 (New York: Rossia Publishing, June 21, 1952).
 6. Selected passages from Orest M. Gladky (R. Mikhnyevich. pseud.), "*Na kanikulakh*" (in Russian), journ. *Zhar Ptyza*, (San Francisco, February–March, 1956), excerpts, ed. by Olga Gladky Verro, 1994. Private collection of Olga Gladky Verro.
 7. Selected passages from Orest M. Gladky (R. Mikhnyevich. pseud.),

“Na kanikulakh.”



An Act of Despair

By Orest M. Gladky

Two days after the “feast during the plague,”¹ as Ivan himself called his drinking bouts, he walked outside. His head was still heavy, and his feet were not yet stepping securely over the sidewalk. But a decision taken as a toast with the last drink was unbending, “I have to end this ordeal.” It was a decision to commit a sin, but he couldn’t live this way anymore. “Let the GPU² take care of me,” he decided.

He reached the GPU headquarters, entered the front door, and announced, “Arrest me!”

They led him directly to the chief of the GPU³ office. Ivan repeated his request, “Arrest me!”

A little man with dark hair was sitting behind the desk. He calmly removed his heavy horn-rimmed spectacles, placed them on the desk, and slowly approached Ivan. “Are you out of your mind? It’s the first time that I have heard such a request,” he said with astonishment. “Are you some kind of a criminal?”

“Yes, I am a criminal,” Ivan answered firmly.

The GPU chief walked toward a big window and sat halfway on the windowsill. Then without looking at the self-proclaimed criminal, he calmly asked, “Tell me, what kind of a crime you have committed?”

“Being born on this God’s earth,” Ivan answered.

The GPU chief turned sharply toward Ivan and ordered him, “Sit down and tell me everything. But try to make sense out of what you are saying!”

Ivan pulled out his military card, threw it on the chief’s desk, and sat down in a chair. The chief walked toward the desk, took the card, and after putting on his spectacles and inspecting the card commented, “A-a-a, my dear, you are *vrangelyevets*.”

“Yes,” answered Ivan and added a proverb, “What is written with a pen, cannot be chopped off with a hatchet!”

“Well,” asked the GPU chief, “what is your crime?”

"That's it!" stated Ivan. "That's the crime!"

"Are you working?" questioned the GPU chief.

"No!" Ivan replied harshly.

"Why?" very calmly asked the GPU chief.

"Nobody will hire me!" Ivan screamed and nervously pulled his small penknife out of his pocket. In desperation he began to cut his wrists and poke the blade into his chest. He felt himself suffocating and began to scream, "No! It is impossible to live like this! Arrest me, or kill me, or let me live!" Ivan was becoming nervously exhausted and started to talk in hardly connected phrases, "Let me live at least for a while like a normal human being... I honestly looked to find work... traveled everywhere... from Caucasus to Vladivostok... everywhere it's the same... I've lost everything... lost my wife and my daughter... I am a criminal... *Vrangelyevets*... deport me... shoot me!" And the loud burst of sobbing of an adult man resounded in the large room of the GPU chief's office and beyond in the corridor.

The GPU chief was now sitting at his desk and unemotionally listening to the incoherent "confession" of a "criminal." He did not even stop Ivan from cutting himself.

"Desperation," with a wicked smile the GPU chief stated, more to himself than to the man sitting in front of him. Then he added spitefully, "What are you complaining about? You are lucky that until now nobody has touched you. You were capable of fighting us? Now learn to live with us."

"But how?!" asked crying Ivan. "At least help me to find work."

"This is not an employment office," the GPU chief said and added, "Have you lived somehow until now? Continue to live the same way."

"Is that a life?" asked Ivan bitterly.

"For you, there is no other way," confirmed the GPU chief.

"Then you had better arrest me, put me in prison, deport me..." pleaded Ivan.

"I have no such orders," replied the GPU chief calmly.

"I tried to steal... to be arrested," explained Ivan.

"Well, what happened then?" asked the GPU chief with amusement.

Ivan explained bitterly, "They caught me, because I was not running away... then brought me to *militia* quarters... they beat

me unmercifully and then... they let me go..."

"Wonderful!" ridiculed the GPU chief. "For being foolish, you didn't deserve anything more."

"What can I do now?" asked Ivan.

"First, calm yourself down," said the GPU chief, "and then..." Ivan looked at him expecting to hear some meaningful suggestion. "Then, go and find yourself a place to work."

Ivan replied hopelessly in a feeble voice, "But nobody will hire me..."

"If you search well, you will find something."

Ivan began to beg him, "Couldn't you help me, not as a GPU chief but as a human being?"

The GPU chief looked at Ivan with disdain and told him bluntly and sternly, "This I cannot do. Clean up the blood, button up your shirt, and get out of here. And keep in mind that no good shall come from this kind of performance. And in the future, don't repeat such foolish actions."

Ivan suddenly felt weak. All the energy and decisiveness had left his body and mind. He got scared when he realized where he was and the kind of risk he had placed himself in.

The GPU chief called an agent and, pointing at Ivan said, "See this wailing creature to the door."

Ivan got out of the building and slowly walked toward his home. He was as if in a trance, without thoughts or desires. He walked into the room and collapsed on the floor.

He woke up late in the afternoon, aching from sleeping all day on the hard floor. Suddenly he remembered his visit to the GPU. He felt not only nauseated from what happened, but became scared for the consequences of that visit. The GPU chief had been too calm and too indifferent to his confessions. If he didn't have instructions to arrest him yesterday, he might now after Ivan's foolish behavior had attracted attention to himself. The GPU chief could probably receive orders today or tomorrow.

He jumped up and collected a few items in his bag and quickly walked out of the room. Without waiting for the local railroad branch Vyetka train, he reached the railroad station by foot; there he boarded the first freight train going north. *It will take me far away from my hometown*, he thought, accommodating himself on the floor of the car.

In about a month Musya received a letter from the town of

Yakutsk in Siberia. Ivan wrote that he was working as a bookkeeper in one of the city offices.

For how long? she thought with a sigh.

Ivan's daughter Lena remembers that her mother never told her anything bad about her father and never accused him of anything. Her impression about her father remained sorrowful for all his suffering. She believed that he was an unfortunate man who probably couldn't find himself and his place in life and that everything had gone wrong and had been distorted in his life. She felt that God should forgive him for his intentional or unintentional sins.

1. See the chapter "Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy."

2. GPU—acronym for *Gosudarstvennoye Politiceskoye Upravlyeniye*—The State Political Department.



Igor Mikhailovich Gladky

By Olga Gladky Verro

I met my Uncle, Igor,¹ several times when I was a small child during my visits and a short stay with my paternal grandfather in Nikitovka and also when he visited us in the village of Nizhnyaya Krynka.² Later, when I was growing up, he visited us for only a few days at a time. I liked him very much because he was young, like my Uncle Petya, my mother's youngest brother, and I felt closer to them than to my other uncle, who was older. From early childhood I got used to calling my uncles and aunts by their first names without "uncle" or "aunt" added to it, and they got used to it. Therefore, I never called him Uncle Igor, but simply Igor.

Igor was the youngest child of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky and Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich. He was born in 1912, a few years before the revolution, and his early childhood years were during the difficult times of the civil war in Russia. In 1920, when Igor was only eight years old, his mother died during the typhus epidemic raging in the country; his younger sister Vera, who was then in her teens, took care of him and of household chores. His father tried to give his younger son as much attention as he could during those hours when he was not at work at the railroad telegraph. He took Igor with him when he was rehearsing with the choir that he conducted.³

Igor attended the elementary school in Nikitovka that was irregularly held during the years of the civil war, and then he went to the town of Artyemovsk,⁴ where he enrolled in and attended Artyemovsk's Industrial Technicum. In 1932 Igor successfully graduated from the Technicum with a certificate as an electrical technician.

In 1933, he was drafted in the obligatory military service and served in the army through 1935. During that time, he was stationed in several places in the Asiatic part of the country in the Uzbek Soviet Republic, in the towns of Kokand and Tashkent, and in the Turkmenian Soviet Republic in the town of Merv. After

being discharged from military service in 1936, he returned to his native Ukraine.

First, he went to visit his sister Vera, who during his absence had gotten married to Fyodor Iosifovich Sokolovsky, whose first wife died following a very long illness. Vera moved from Nikitovka to live with her husband in Yasinovataya,⁵ where he was employed as a communication agent at the railroad office. His old mother and young daughter Shura⁶ also lived in the house. When Igor arrived there, Vera already had her own little daughter, Svyetlana. The house was crowded, and after a few months Igor had to leave because his sister couldn't accommodate him for a longer stay.

Then Igor went to visit his older sister, Anya,⁷ who lived with her common-law husband Sergey Ivanovich Plokhotin in a one-room apartment in Taganrog. Her husband was employed at the railroad station and lately was on the alert, paying close attention to inquiries into the political past of the employees that had been going on for some time. He knew that sooner or later his turn would come, and he was trying to get transferred somewhere far from there. Anya told her brother that their situation was very shaky and that if the transfer didn't come soon, they were ready to flee from Taganrog at any time. This meant that Igor couldn't remain living with them. Again, he stayed with them for only a few months.



Igor Mikhailovich Gladky. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1938. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.

Finally, he decided to visit his older brother Orest, hoping that the situation there could allow him to stay long enough to find work for himself. Thus, in the spring of 1938, he arrived in Slavyansk and found out that the situation in the family of his brother Orest was better⁸ than that of his sisters and that, maybe, he could stay with him for a while as he looked for work.

At that time, in the Soviet Union all emphasis was directed toward industrial development. To emphasize this new trend, a new Communist party slogan was coined: "We shall catch up and shall overtake the capitalist states in industrial development!" It was prominently and profusely used in the press. Big placards

were placed on the walls of the factories, and it was proclaimed at all Communist party and workers' meetings. Intensive development of the industry was going on in all areas and in all regions of the country, and a person with technical education had no difficulty finding work.

Indeed, when Dmitry Pyetrovich Boyko, from whom we rented the apartment, suggested applying at the Soda Factory⁹ where he worked, Igor was immediately hired as an electrical technician. The master of the electrical shop was a Communist and, by hiring Igor, he could delegate all the work to him while he maintained the title, the position, and better pay.

Igor applied at the factory office right away to have an apartment in the factory's apartment complex. However, being single, he could only have a room to share with some other family, and he also had to wait for it. Meanwhile, he lived with us, and we moved my bed to my parents' room, while Igor slept on the sofa in my room. In the beginning he was returning home right after work and eating supper with us. Then he began to come home late, and my mother had to keep the food warm for him. Since it was becoming more frequent, she asked him, "Igor, I noticed that you come home late. Did you find yourself a woman?"

Igor got embarrassed and answered rudely, "It is none of your business!"

My mother didn't expect such a harsh reaction to an innocent question. After all, her brother-in-law was of an age that there was nothing wrong in looking for the companionship of a woman. But we found out very soon that there was a reason for his outburst.

Soon after this incident, Igor came home and simply said, "I got married. I am moving to my wife's apartment. I will invite you to meet her and my new family as soon as we settle down."

We were surprised that he had mentioned "my family," but my mother didn't ask him any questions, and he didn't explain any details at that time.

After a week or so, he invited us to visit him. We had to walk all the way to the outskirts of the town, where workers' apartments had been built next to the Soda Factory. The apartment houses were built according to the standards of those days, two-story brick houses similar to those we lived in the hamlet of Kysyelyevka,¹⁰ with wooden outhouses serving several

buildings. The apartment was on the ground floor, and Igor encountered us at the door.

As we entered, Igor presented to us his family, "This is my wife, Antonina Yulyevna,¹¹ and this is her mother, Eva Yakovlyevna, but we call her Babushka." For some reason, the greetings were formal; we simply shook hands; there were no embraces and no kissing, as one would have expected greeting relatives.

Babushka was holding a baby boy who was about a year-and-a-half old, and Igor presented him to us, "This is Fredik,¹² my wife's son from her first marriage. He is now my son." It became clear to us that Igor had acquired a ready-made family.

Antonina Yulyevna prepared us a simple dinner, and we all sat at the kitchen table while Babushka served the food. In talking with Antonina Yulyevna, we found out that she was also working at the Soda Factory, while her mother took care of the baby. After dinner, Antonina Yulyevna found a moment when Igor was talking with my father and told my mother that she was expecting Igor's baby and was hoping that it would be a girl.

She showed us the apartment, which was kept very clean. It consisted of one room and a kitchen, and she already had all the necessary furniture for the kitchen and the bedroom. The metal tubular double bed had a nice bedspread, and the baby's bed was beside it. There was a small wardrobe and a chair, and a hand-operated sewing machine was standing on the little table. In the kitchen was her mother's bed, stove, kitchen table, several chairs, and shelves for storing dishes, pots, and pans. On the windows simple cotton curtains had been hung, and some unframed pictures were on the walls.

I noticed that Babushka wore plain cotton clothing covered with a clean apron. She spoke with a foreign accent and was very solicitous with serving food and, especially eager to please Igor. As soon as she cleared the table after dinner, Babushka took the baby and took care of him, allowing Antonina Yulyevna to socialize with us.

Antonina Yulyevna wore a simple dress made from cotton fabric, and she proudly told us that she sewed it herself. It fitted close to her somewhat plump body, already revealing some fullness in the abdomen, indicating that she was well advanced in her pregnancy. When we were leaving, my mother invited Igor

and Antonina Yulyevna to come and visit us before the new baby would be born.

As we were walking home, which took us a good half an hour, we exchanged our opinions about Igor's family. I said that I liked the baby boy and Babushka, and my mother agreed with that. But on my parents' minds were other aspects of Igor's sudden marriage. At some point my father bluntly commented, "Either she trapped him, or he trapped himself!"

To this my mother replied, "Well, what did you expect? He had a very good time all those evenings that he was coming home late."

My father continued to reason, "She is a divorced woman and found a simpleton whom she could seduce and entangle him into a marriage."

But my mother replied, "But he was not an innocent man—he found an easy way to gratify himself, hoping that he could get away with it. However, in the long run he found a real bargain, a whole new family, a wife, a son, a mother-in-law who is ready to please him, and a furnished apartment to live in—he just had to walk in."

After a while my father asked, "Do you think he loves her?"

"Everything is possible," replied my mother, "but it seems more probable that he flopped into it..."

"After all, she does not represent anything special," reasoned my father. "She is not a beauty, not very educated, just an ordinary woman."

My mother replied, "Maybe he was looking to find only a pleasing woman."

There was a long pause in their discussion, and then my mother resumed her reflections. "Orest, I think that you wrongly assume that your brother's upbringing, education, and tastes are the same as yours. Remember, your mother died when Igor was very young, and he grew up without her influence. He missed all that cultural milieu with which she surrounded you and your sisters Anya and Vera."

"It's true," replied my father. "Igor grew up during the troubled years of the civil war, when the only preoccupation was to find some food to fill the stomach. It was our young sister Vera who took care of him while our father was at work."

"Also, you should not forget," continued my mother, "he

didn't attend the good old pre-revolutionary school and a gymnasium that could have given him a good cultural background, as the other children in your family had. And the Soviet *Technicum* that he attended gave him only technical education. You are forgetting that he is not culturally sophisticated or very educated himself. I think that he found a woman that was more or less on his level and that she is probably just right for him."

I was listening to my parents' discussion and couldn't figure out why it was so important to them to find out the reason why Igor had married this woman. I understood only one thing—that my father expected his brother to marry an educated and more cultured woman and that he was disappointed with Igor's choice. My mother was trying to convince him that his brother didn't need to meet the expectations of my father, but he couldn't see it that way. I liked my Uncle Igor and could not agree with their reasoning.

For some reason, my parents and Igor's wife, right from the beginning when they met, didn't call each other by their first names, as was usual in the family; they called her Antonina Yulyevna, and she called my mother Antonina Gavriylovna and my father Orest Mikhailovich, as it was used respectfully with other people, but not usual with relatives.

Later, Igor and Antonina Yulyevna came to visit us several times, and we also went to visit them. During these visits we found out a lot about her family and her life. She and Igor told us that her father was Yulius Gauk and that his nationality was German by birth, but that he had lived before in the Baltic region.

Her mother, Eva Yakovlyevna Svirbul, was Latvian. They came to Ukraine with the whole family from the Latvian town of Dwinsk, also called Daugaschvill. Her father had found work as a mechanic in the beer factory located in the hamlet of Rudchenkovka, adjacent to the coal mine of the same name, in the region of Donetsk Basin.

Antonina Yulyevna had four brothers. The oldest brother, Adolf, was employed as a bookkeeper in Stalino. He was married, and his wife's name was Klavdia; they had a son Edward, whom they called Edik. The second brother, Nikolay, also worked as a mechanic at the same beer factory with his father and remained there after his father died. He had a wife named Yevgeniya

Govorukha, whom they called Zhenya, and they had a daughter, Zhana. The third brother, Otto, was married to Yevgeniya Golovyna, and they had one son. These three brothers, being of German ancestry, were arrested in 1937 and had all been deported and disappeared without any trace in the concentration camps, called *constlagers*. The fourth brother, Wilhelm, was still free at that time.

Antonina Yulyevna got married in Rudchenkovka to a bookkeeper with the last name of Borisov. Her husband was a drunkard and a womanizer, and she divorced him soon after their son Alfred was born. After that, she moved to Slavyansk with her mother and found work in one of the shops at the Soda Factory, where she met Igor.

After marriage Igor adopted Fredik and changed Fredik's last name from Borisov to Gladky. Antonina Yulyevna soon left her work at the Soda Factory because of pregnancy; her wish came true in January 1937, when their little daughter was born. They named her in memory of Igor's mother, Nadyezhda, and they called her Nanochka.

In 1939, Antonina Yulyevna received the bad news that her fourth brother Wilhelm had also been arrested and disappeared. They didn't accuse him of doing anything wrong politically; there were no accusations, no trial. It was the same reason—all four brothers were guilty only of having German names and ancestors and were paying the price for this "crime." From the time of the revolution and the civil war, the unwritten rule of the Bolshevik Party remained the same: "It is better to put in prison ten innocent men than to leave one 'enemy of the people' free."

The birth of Nanochka softened the attitude of my father toward the marriage of his brother and brought our families closer. When my parents bought the home with the garden, Igor came often to visit us with the children, who liked to play in the courtyard and run on the alleys of the garden. I was very fond of my little cousins, who were very cute, and I liked to visit them. I liked it even more when they came to visit us.

Our neighbors had a good pedigree Spitz dog called Sharik, all white with a long silky coat and pointed ears. He adopted us right away and considered us as his second owners. We fed him, and he watched our home; he didn't allow anybody to enter the gate. He would not only bark, but actually bite into the legs and

clothing of anyone suspicious to him, especially the beggars.

But with children this dog was a docile playmate. Fredik used to put his little sister Nanochka on Sharik's back. She would grab the long fur to hold on, and the dog would allow her to ride, slowly walking with her on the long sidewalk from the house to the gate and back. In the beginning, I was afraid that the dog would bite her if she pulled its fur too hard, but then I got used to it, and every time Nanochka would come, Sharik would run and greet her and allow her and her brother Fredik to play with him.

At the end of the summer of 1939, my father's older sister Anna¹³ suddenly came to visit us and her brother Igor and to meet his wife and family for the first time. But, during her short visit, it became clear that the main reason Anya had come to see us was to tell her brothers that she was leaving Taganrog and to say goodbye to all of us, because she anticipated that she would not be able to see her brothers and their families for a very long time.



Igor Mikhaylovich Gladky and Anna Mikhaylovna Gladkaya during her last visit to her brothers, Orest and Igor, before her departure to the Tashkent Region to hide from the secret police, who were in pursuit of her life-time companion Sergey Ivanovich Plokhotin. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.

She explained¹⁴ that her common-law husband, Sergey Ivanovich Plokhotin, who was employed as a dispatcher on the big railroad station in Taganrog, had finally received a transfer to the small railroad station on the Turkmen-Siberian Rail Line near the town of Alma-Ata, the capital city of the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan. They were moving immediately from Taganrog to the Asiatic part of the Soviet Union.

I knew that they lived in Taganrog for a long time, that he had been employed at the railroad station, and that Anya was a nurse in a hospital. But at the time of their visit, I was kept from

knowing the reason for their sudden decision to move so far away. Only much later, I found out the truth that there was an inquiry about railroad employees and that someone had warned Sergey that they were looking into his past. Since during the revolution and civil war he had been a junior officer in the White Cossacks Cavalry Regiment, he feared the usual persecution and arrest as an “enemy of the people.” Therefore, to cover his tracks, they decided it was better for him to move as far as possible from Taganrog. I also understood that this was the reason why they were not officially married—to keep Anya safe in case he was arrested.

I did not remember my Aunt Anya well because I had visited her last when I was about four years old. But from my visit in Taganrog I remembered vividly only the spectacle of the famous Durov Circus that my father took me to see. My parents often told me that Anya had taken care of me when I was just a toddler, when my mother was away at the health resort in Crimea for her migraine cure.

At the time of her very short, only a few days visit, I was able to get to know her better. From the way she was talking, I came to the conclusion that she was very opinionated against the NKVD,¹⁵ Bolsheviks, and the Soviet government, and was not afraid to talk about it with us. I overheard my father reminding her several times that she shouldn’t talk in my presence so frankly and, especially, not to let me hear about her husband’s past. I thought, “He reprimands his sister, as if he thinks that I don’t know what is going on in this country, that people are disappearing for no reason at all and without trials.”

Anya had just visited her younger sister Vera and her family. She told us that Vera was very unhappy right after she got married. She said, “Vera went through hard times while she was living with her mother-in-law. That witch was very quarrelsome and for some reason didn’t like her new daughter-in-law. She constantly reminded her that her son’s first wife was so good that Vera could never match her.” Anya regretted that her younger sister Vera had become very nervous from all the quarrels with her husband’s mother and, although now they were living separately, she remained very nervous.

Anya, who was always outspoken, criticized Vera for being impatient with her little daughter Svyetlana, for screaming at her,

and for physically punishing her for small transgressions. But she partially justified her sister's behavior by explaining, "Vera was growing up at the time of revolution and civil war when she lost her mother and had a difficult task taking care of the family during the famine before she was in her teens. And she had taken care of you, Igor, and it was not the easiest thing to do—you were the first in her life that made her become nervous."

The goodbye between the two brothers and their older sister was very emotional, as if everybody had a premonition that this was the last time that they would see her. And I was sorry that she was going to live so far away when I had just begun to know her.

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1. The younger brother of Orest M. Gladky. See the chapters "Family of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky" and "Home at Last."
 2. See the chapter "The Village School."
 3. See the chapter "Home at Last."
 4. Former town of Bakhmut. See the chapter "The Last Gentleman."
 5. The railroad station and town south of Nikitovka.
 6. Nickname for Alexandra. See the chapter "Vera Mikhailovna Gladky Sokolovsky."
 7. Nickname for Anna. Anna Mikhaylovna Gladky, the older sister of Orest M. Gladky.
 8. See the chapter "The Newspaper's Proofreader."
 9. The factory was extracting the salty underground water and transforming it into various chemical products.
 10. See the chapter "The Hamlet of Kiselyevka."
 11. Antonina Yuliusovna, from the original German first name of her father, Yulius, but she preferred to be called "Yulyevna," which didn't sound foreign.
 12. Diminutive of the name Alfred.
 13. From the photograph of Anya and her younger brother Igor sitting in the courtyard of their brother Orest during her last visit in Slavyansk.
 14. See the chapter "The Village School."
 15. NKVD—*Narodny Commissariat Vnutrennikh Del*—Peoples Commissariate of Internal Affairs, or Soviet government secret police.



True Friendship and First Love

By Olga Gladky Verro

At the end of the summer of 1938, my parents found a small house that was for sale. It was only a two-room house nestled inside a courtyard, but it had a very big fruit garden adjacent to it. It was conveniently located only a few houses from the corner of Kharkovsky Street on the former Railroad Street, which the Soviets had renamed the Street of the Young Communars. On that corner stood the printing house where my father was working as the proofreader¹ of the local newspaper *Bilshovyk*,² as it was spelled in Ukrainian, because it was printed in that language. The house was also very close to the local railway branch station Bankovskaya, where one could take the local branch train Vyetka to Slavyansk Kurort,³ a health resort, or to Slavyansk Station, the railway station. At the end of August, my parents bought that property, and, before the beginning of the new school year, we moved into our own house.⁴

My parents were enthusiastic about the property, especially about the big fruit garden. But I had my doubts about the value of the fruit garden because it had been completely neglected and resembled a jungle, with high grass covering the whole place.

That fall, my parents and I worked very hard to bring the fruit garden into good condition. My classes in school were scheduled, as in the previous years, in the second shift, and my father was working until late at night when the morning newspaper was being prepared for printing. As we were both home in the morning, my father and I spent all our time in the garden; he pruned the fruit trees, and I pulled out the high grass with my bare hands, trying to remove as much of the roots as possible. My mother removed the grass in the afternoon after returning from teaching in school. And all three of us worked from early morning until night on the weekends, hoping to bring the garden back into

good condition before winter.

It took us a couple of months of intensive work, up to the days when the ground became frozen. By that time the garden was ready for the spring; all trees were neatly pruned, the ground was cleared of grass, the soil was tilled around the trees in large circles, and the tree trunks were painted with slaked lime⁵, used as an insect-killing compound. Now, on our days off, my father, mother, and I would walk on the garden alleys proudly admiring our work. I knew that I had worked in the garden as hard as my parents had and, although I was only fifteen-and-a-half years old, I suddenly felt that I was not a child anymore.

On the first of September, 1938, I went back to school to start the ninth grade. Sometime toward the end of the previous school year,⁶ when I got new eyeglasses and could see what was written on the blackboard better, I moved from the desk in the front of the classroom, where I was sitting with my friend Syma, to sit alone on an empty desk near the window in the cozy corner in the back of the room. There I could be more relaxed than I'd felt, being close to the teacher's desk. During some boring lessons I could read a book, or do some of my homework without being observed by the teachers or by the classmates. But my friend Syma didn't want to wear eyeglasses and couldn't see well on the blackboard, therefore, she remained alone in the same second desk in the middle row, where she had sat last year.



*Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky), Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukraine, 1939.
Photo by Orest M. Gladky*

As before, Syma and I remained in the pupils' brigade with Kostya Syrota. But now Syma and I lived farther from each other, and if she needed my help in doing her homework, she had to come to my house in the morning before going to school—her parents would not allow her to walk alone across the center of the town after dark. From her house she had to walk along Gogol Street, now renamed Karl Marx Street. It led to and bordered one side of the Church Square, now renamed by the communists Lenin Square. The name was very rarely used by the inhabitants of the town because the church building was in the middle of it; now it had been converted by the Soviets to a movie theater. Usually, in the evening and at night, there were people standing in front of it. Some were waiting to enter to see the movie, but some just gathered there to pursue their own interests or to meet others, since it was the one place in town where the militiamen would allow such unauthorized gathering.

Although many young people went there for socializing, most

concerned parents would not allow their children to go there at night; it was known that it was also a gathering place for hooligans and other undesirable elements of the populace. On the way to my house Syma had to walk across the Church Square to the other side, where Lenin Street bordered it. Then she had to turn into Kharkovsky Street, now renamed Taras Shevchenko⁷ Street, and to walk until it crossed the railroad tracks and turn into Zheleznodorozhnaya Street, now renamed Young Communars Street. Then she had to walk to our house, which was not far from that corner. Syma brought some food from home, and after I finished helping her with homework, we would have our lunch together before going to school.

One evening, after the school year had already begun, our next-door neighbors came to see me. They were Fanya and her husband Alexandr Vasylyevich, the daughter and the son-in-law of Maria Nikolayevna Ivanova, from whom my parents had bought our house.⁸ With them also came a very skinny boy of about my age. Alexandr Vasylyevich introduced the boy, "This is my nephew, Yasha⁹ Voronov. He will be living with us and will be attending ninth grade in your school. In the school office they told me that he would be in your class. We came to ask you to do him a great favor. Yasha needs help to catch up with his studies. Fanya and I thought that being a good student and also our neighbor, you could help him with his school work."

I replied without hesitation, "I think that Yasha will be placed in our pupils' brigade¹⁰, and we will help him."

Alexandr Vasylyevich looked at Yasha and said, "I told you that Lyalya is a nice girl and that she would agree to help you."

Yasha smiled timidly and nodded his head. And his uncle explained to me, "You see, Yasha is a nice boy from a good family. His father was a devoted revolutionary and was killed in Siberia during the civil war. Yasha was brought up by his mother, and until now, he has lived with her in another town." Then he hesitated for a moment, as if deciding if he should disclose to me the reason why Yasha had come to live with them. He placed his arm around Yasha's shoulders and frankly admitted, "You see, lately Yasha got in the very bad company of some hooligans and was neglecting his school work. His mother did everything possible to put him on the right track but was unsuccessful in removing him from the influence of the gang." Alexandr

Vasylyevich concluded his explanation, "So, my sister came to seek help from me, her only brother. Fanya and I decided to let my nephew live with us and give him a chance to continue his education and to graduate from the Ten-Years-School."

After a moment of silence, Alexandr Vasylyevich apologetically asked, "Could Yasha walk with you tomorrow to school?"

"Of course," I replied.

"Could you do him one more favor?" he added. "Could you introduce him to some good boys in your class so he shall have a good start?"

"Don't worry; I will introduce him to the boy in our pupils' brigade. He is a very nice boy," I confirmed with reassurance.

The next day, Yasha and I walked together to school. He was very shy, and I almost had to force him to talk by constantly involving him in conversation. As we arrived at school, the first thing I did was to introduce Yasha to Kostya Syrota, and asked him to introduce the new student to our class. Kostya also introduced Yasha to his school pal, Komarsky, with whom he used to go to the physical education equipment room for extra exercises in gymnastics.¹¹



Yakov (Yasha) Voronov, Olga's best school friend. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, July 27, 1938.

As I expected, Yasha was assigned to our pupils' brigade. From that day on, Kostya and I began intensively to coach both Yasha and Syma. The three of us, Kostya, Syma, and I would come at about nine o'clock in the morning to Yasha's uncle's apartment in the big house of his mother-in-law, Maria Nikolayevna Ivanova.

His uncle and uncle's wife were at work, and their small boy was with his grandmother in another part of the house. We had a large room all to ourselves, and there was enough space for all of us to work on the big dining room table. It was a perfect place for us to study. Nobody bothered us, and we didn't bother anybody. The only unpleasant thing that bothered me, and probably Syma and Kostya, was to enter through the back door, where some mornings on the porch several uncovered chamber pots full of smelly yellow urine were left. In most families the pots were commonly used during the night since the outhouses were usually located at the far end of the courtyards. But Yasha's aunt sometimes was in a hurry to go to work and didn't have time to

remove them.

Kostya and I usually did most of our homework in the evening, and then in the morning we would share in tutoring Yasha and Syma, either one-to-one, or together, depending on which subject they needed help with. Both Kostya and I were very good in mathematics, physics, and chemistry, and it was rewarding for us to be helpful in tutoring our schoolmates.

Yasha was far behind in all other subjects, too, and needed extra help in catching up. But Syma didn't need help in the subjects that required only memorization of facts, dates, and names.



Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky) and her school best friend Serafima (Syma Shyrman). Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, April 30, 1938. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.

Sometimes, all four of us would study together such subjects as history, literature, grammar, German, or geography by reading aloud and answering the questions at the end of the chapters in the textbooks. It was less boring and even fun to study in a group, and we really had a good time. Kostya contributed a lot to keeping all of us in a good mood with his wit and humor, finding the funny side in the most boring moments. Being in friendly company, Yasha slowly lost some of his shyness and revealed his gentle and pliable nature.

Kostya and Syma brought food for lunch, which we had before going to school. Kostya would stay and eat with Yasha, while Syma and I would go to eat in my house just across the row of the lilac bushes that bordered our and Maria Ivanovna's courtyards. Then, the four of us would walk to school together, joking, laughing, and having a lot of fun.

This happy friendship between the two boys and the two girls didn't go unnoticed by one of the nasty girls in our class. She probably found it very strange, because most of the pupils' brigades were either all boys or all girls. This girl was Olga Krasnaya, whom I already knew from the sixth grade. In the seventh grade, she became the ringleader of a small clique of girls that were under her malign influence. The girls in Olga Krasnaya's clique also belonged to the same pupils' brigade, and many of them were between borderline and average pupils. These girls were always engaged in criticizing, faultfinding, and picking on the others. I detested them for this and Syma and Kostya felt the same. Yasha didn't know them well yet, but he believed that the opinions of all three of his friends should be true.



Girls from Ten-Years-School No 15 Tenth Class in the Park of Kurort Slavyansk. From right to left: Olga Gladkaya (Gladky), Syma Shyrman, Olga Krasnaya, Raya Gunicheva, Ala Sobchenko. Kurort Slavyansk Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1939.

Olga Krasnaya became jealous that our brigade came up with good ratings in overall grades, in attendance, and in discipline, which were graphed on the wall chart where the progress of all pupils' brigades in our class were reported. She became suspicious of our happy friendship and began to gossip about the relationship between Kostya, Yasha, Syma, and me by inventing all kinds of hard-to-believe amorous intrigues among us. For some unknown reason, she selected among the four of us to pick on me and did it usually when Kostya and Yasha were not nearby. Several times I had verbal quarrels with her, and I was getting tired of this nonsense. One day, during the long recess between classes as she began to pick on me again, I raised my voice so all the other classmates could hear me, and told her with contempt, "From now on you can yap like a dog as much as you want, but I won't answer you, or talk back to you, ever! For me, you don't exist anymore!" Surprisingly, it produced the desired effect, and she stopped bothering me. From that day on, I ignored her completely. I would walk by her not paying any attention to her, as if she were invisible, and for a long time I did not talk to her.

My friends, Syma, Kostya, and Yasha approved of how I'd resolved this problem. Kostya sometimes liked to tease Olga Krasnaya by purposely making her curious about what kind of friendly rapport we had. He used several tricks to do that. When she was nearby, Kostya would give me a small note saying loud enough for her to hear, "Read this and tell me if you like it." Other times, he would come close to me and to Syma and call, "Yasha, come here, I have something to tell all of you." Then, when we would come close, he would whisper to us, "Pay attention to how Olga Krasnaya is watching us. Oh, how she would like to know what I am telling you." And he would loudly add, "Good, I am glad that you all agree with me!" All four of us would laugh as if he had really told us something funny or secret.

This support by Kostya, Yasha, and Syma had a very powerful effect on my appreciation of the true friendship that I cherished and shared with my friends. Our genuine friendship was reinforced by the close cooperation and the worthy purpose to which the four of us devoted ourselves. In helping our teammates, Kostya and I gained mutual esteem for each other's abilities in learning and for our skills in teaching our friends. We

both knew that Syma and Yasha sincerely appreciated our efforts that helped them receive passing grades in the subjects that were very difficult for them to master. All four of us were sure that we could depend on each other for help on any occasion, and this complete trust bonded our friendship more than anything else.

In my friendship with Kostya, it was important that neither he nor I had romantic expectations of each other. Kostya was a very handsome boy, with dark brown eyes that emitted a magnetic glow, which infused warmth and transmitted buoyant cheerfulness. He had a lively personality and a sense of humor that he abundantly bestowed especially on Syma, teasing her and making her blush.



Konstantin (Kostya) Syrota, Olga's best school friend. In the photo: Kostya as a Baltazar Baltazarovich in a play "Marriage of Balzaminov" by Alexandr N. Ostrovsky performed by the pupils of the Ten-Years School No 15. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, Spring, 1940. Photo by Vladimir Dobry.

Many girls in our class would have wished to have him not only as a friend, but also as a sweetheart, as was the case with my girlfriend Syma. But I never allowed myself to even think about him as more than a friend, because his friendship was very important to me. I also knew that he was romantically involved with a girl who lived in his neighborhood. He never talked about her, and I didn't pry into his affairs of heart and didn't tell anyone about it, not even Syma, which allowed her to hope for his love. I also never told her that Kostya's parents were divorced and that he had transferred to our school because his last name had been changed from Zaytsev to Syrota. I knew about this from my father, who had Kostya as a pupil when he was teaching in the Shnurkovsky School. I felt that Kostya appreciated my discretion and respected me for keeping his secret.

At the same time, I didn't keep it a secret from my friends that I liked Sergey Kairov, another new boy who'd arrived in our ninth-grade class that year. Hence, Kostya and I were truly sincere friends in the full sense. Yasha was also a very devoted friend whose respect, loyalty, and sincerity were unquestionable. If he had any sentimental feelings toward me, he certainly didn't show it, knowing that I was in love with Sergey. This pure friendship with the two boys gave me a real sense of security, respect, and attention that, as a teenage girl, I needed to have from boys at that time. I enjoyed the friendship, which was open, clear, and straightforward, without any entanglements or demands that tender feelings or an infatuation could have imposed.

But my infatuation with Sergey Kairov was not as simple to define and to handle emotionally. Sergey also came to our class in 1938—but much later than Yasha. His family came to Slavyansk from the town of Kharkov. I liked him very much from the beginning.

Sergey proudly considered himself to be a poet. From the first days after his arrival, he began to show his talent by writing poetry for our class wall-newspaper, edited by the pupils under the guidance of our teacher of Russian language and literature, Anna Nikolayevna Shmulyevich. She immediately brought to the attention of the class that she had read many of Sergey's poems and considered him to be an aspiring poet.

Sergey was very reserved and kept himself apart from the other pupils, boys or girls. The only one with whom he had some

kind of relationship was Fimka Zusmanovich, with whom he began to collaborate in editing the class wall-newspaper.

Overall, Sergey behaved himself as if he were culturally and intellectually superior compared to the other students in our class, especially in literature and history. And it was very obvious that he was well-read in those subjects because he always raised his hand and elaborately answered the teacher's questions with more details than our teachers had given us in their lessons, or what was written in our textbooks.

Most boys, including Kostya, considered him to be a snob because of his habit of showing off in class, and also because he had more refined manners than they had. But from the time Kostya found out that I had romantic feelings toward Sergey, he kept his opinions to himself and respected my right to privacy in matters of the heart, as I did with his.

But I couldn't see the faults that the others saw in Sergey. I was infatuated with the inner nature of this exceptional boy and fell madly in love with him. I admired his refined manners, dignity, and self-assurance in expressing himself. His physical appearance was secondary in importance for me; however, I considered him to be handsome. He was slender, but not of athletic build, and of average height for a boy of his age. He was always dressed neatly in clothes of better quality than it was common for the boys in our little provincial town. His gray eyes looked calm, pensive, and serious, as if he were concentrating on something beyond what was going on around him. He had dark blond hair that he kept well-combed back, leaving his forehead open to dominate the other features of his face.

Of course, Sergey didn't even suspect about my tender feelings for him, and I didn't dare reveal them to him. My friend Syma was glad that I'd finally fallen in love. She was always afraid that by being so close to Kostya every day and having such a strong friendship, I might fall in love with him and become her rival. She was very sympathetic to my love for Sergey and consoled me, "I have been in love with Kostya for three years, and I am happy just to have him close by and to see his beautiful brown eyes, his smiling face, and to hear his ringing voice."

"Yes," I would reply, "you are with Kostya every morning when we are studying and walking to school together. And he knows that you are in love with him. But I don't dare let Sergey

know about my feelings; he doesn't even know that I exist."

"But he keeps himself superior to all in our class and doesn't get close to anyone, not just you," she consoled me.

I was so influenced by Sergey's poetical talent that I began to experiment with writing poetry and was hoping that this could bring us closer together. Once, I wrote a short poem that seemed to me to be quite good and well rhymed. During one long recess when Sergey was sitting at his desk reviewing the lesson in the textbook, I approached him and with trepidation in my heart dared to ask his opinion of my poetry. He received my request with some curiosity and quickly browsed through my creation. After reading it, he replied very coldly without any consideration of my feelings, "It is not poetry; it's only an ordinary verse. To write true poetry one should have talent; it is not enough to rhyme the words." He handed the page back to me and resumed reading the textbook without any other comments.

Humiliated and ashamed from hearing such sharp criticism, I silently retreated to my desk. I was very upset and felt like a complete failure; I was wounded both in my pride and in my feelings toward Sergey. Disheartened, I sat at my desk in the corner of the classroom for the rest of the school day without paying any attention to the lessons and brooding over Sergey's indifference toward me.

For a few weeks I felt sad and depressed; however, my sentimental feelings for him remained unchanged. It just became clear to me that there was very little hope that my love could be reciprocated. Sitting undisturbed in the back of the classroom, I could see Sergey's back and sometimes his profile. I occasionally would dream about how happy I would be if, one day, he would notice me and maybe even like me. Some other times, I would think, "Why did I fall in love with Sergey and not with any of the other boys in my class?" I would look at some of them sitting at their desks and consider their good and bad points and ask myself, "Why not that boy?... And why not that?" I couldn't find an answer.

I looked at Vadim Doytchev, who was sitting on the first desk in the first row near the door. He was tall, well-built, handsome, blond, and fair-skinned, with blue eyes and an open, smiling, friendly face. He had a good lively character and liked to joke and make fun. He was intelligent, but he didn't apply himself much to

schoolwork and excelled only in gymnastics.

Sitting a few desks farther in the same row was the Jewish boy Ruvka¹² Litvinov. Although he was short compared to the other boys of his age, he was well-proportioned, agile, and had wavy, dark-brown hair and brown eyes. He was smart, quick-witted, and a good pupil.

Another Jewish boy who sat toward the end of the first row in front of Kostya Syrota, who occupied the last desk, was Vovka¹³ Dobry. He was the tallest in our class, maybe in the whole school. He also had everything else complementing his height—very long arms, hands, fingers, legs, face, and nose. He wore large round eyeglasses and looked much older than the other boys in our class. Vovka was a grandson of the director of the town's orphanage, and because of this, he gave himself airs of importance. He seemed to be intelligent, but he didn't apply himself much to study and was content to be an average student. He had the latest-model photo camera of a very good quality, and he dedicated himself to photography; that was the hobby to which he allotted most of his time. He was always taking pictures of pupils in our class and was considered to be a photo-correspondent for our class wall-newspaper.

In front of Vovka Dobry sat Fimka¹⁴ Zusmanovich, also a Jewish boy with whom I studied in the fifth grade, when I imagined being in love with him. But it didn't last for long. He was vain and insensitive to the feelings of others, and this trait quickly dissipated my infatuation.

Yasha Pewsner, the red-cheeked, fat, and clumsy Jewish boy, sat in the middle row, a few desks behind Syma Shyrman, and behind Yasha Voronov. Yasha Pewsner didn't study well because of both, low intelligence and lack of effort in applying himself to schoolwork. He gained the attention of pupils and teachers by being the clown in our class.

In the middle row behind Yasha Pevsner sat Sergey Kairov, and behind him another Jewish boy, whom everybody called just by his last name, Kogan. He was of average height and build, was always polite, and was a serious, diligent student.

With so many nice boys in my class, I didn't find anyone to be as exceptional as Sergey, who captivated my heart. I shared with Syma about my unhappiness and continued to pour my feelings of love, hope, and despair into the verses, as Sergey would have

called them, but of course, I didn't dare to show them to Sergey or even to my friends Yasha and Kostya, and only Syma admired them. I'm sure that, at that time, nobody in our class even suspected about my infatuation with Sergey.

1. See the chapter "The Newspaper's Proofreader."
2. Spelled "*Bolshevik*" in Russian.
3. The health resort.
4. See the chapter "A Fight for Our Garden."
5. Calcium hydroxide.
6. See the chapter "The New Ten-Years-School in Slavyansk."
7. The popular Ukrainian poet who described in his poetry the hard life of the peasants during the period of serfdom.
8. See the chapter "A Fight for Our Garden."
9. Nickname for Yakov.
10. See the chapter "The New Ten-Years-School in Slavyansk"
11. See the chapter "The New Ten-Years-School in Slavyansk"
12. Nickname for Ruvim.
13. Nickname for Vladimir. From photographs of the groups of pupils made by Vovka (Vladimir) Dobry.
14. Nickname for Yefim.



A Fight for Our Garden

By Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky

During the years of 1937–1939, the Communist Bolshevik Party was preoccupied with its internal struggle for power and its domination over the country. There were endless purges of the party members, of the Soviet apparatus bureaucracy, and of the military higher rank commanders.¹ Everything belonged to the state, and everybody was working in the government-owned factories, shops, offices, schools, and other state enterprises. Therefore, terror persisted in enveloping the life of ordinary people, and nobody could see the end of it. The arrests were continuing, and thousands of innocent lives were perishing in the prisons and concentration camps called *contslagers*.

The ordinary people became completely estranged from politics; in fact, the more neutral and detached they were from the Bolsheviks and their party activities, the safer they felt. And probably they were. The population at large was constantly adapting to the ever-changing rules and new regulations or requirements that were forced on them by the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet government.

With great effort and patience, the ordinary people were trying to overcome all the difficulties and obstacles impeding their lives. Apprehensively watching every step, they were bustling and swarming like ants, pushing their lives forward, infusing themselves into a common flow of human existence. The normal course of the lives of the common mortals not belonging to the party and Soviet bureaucracy elite was to carry on an everyday struggle for their existence. And, although each person had to deal with his own individual needs, interests, desires and passions, the overwhelming priority in everyone's life was the same.

They had to concentrate all their efforts on the best way of earning their living or managing their scarce resources; on finding where to buy food and clothing, which were constantly in short

supply; and on bringing up and educating their children with high standards of morality and aspirations. Everyone wanted to make his or her life better and more comfortable. Families had dreams and were making sacrifices to buy or to build their own modest homes. Some were lucky to find already existing private houses that were available for sale; the others were contriving to build themselves a house on a small piece of land where they could grow vegetables or cultivate a fruit garden.

After many years of constantly moving from one place to another, our family finally settled in Slavyansk,² where it appeared that my husband had found an ideal place of employment, where nobody was inquiring about his past³ Now, my husband and I could allow ourselves to have a dream of having our own place to live. We decided to buy a house in my name for reasons of security. We hoped that it would not likely be confiscated if my husband was again investigated or arrested for his secretly guarded past of having been a volunteer in the White Army. We started to save money for the house and, when we saved enough, we began to look for a place to buy that would have land for cultivating vegetable and fruit gardens.

In August of 1938, we were fortunate to find such a place not far from where my husband was employed. It was located on Number 86 Yunykh Komunarov⁴ Street, a few houses beyond the printing house on the corner of Kharkovsky Street. It was a very small outbuilding situated inside the courtyard and in the back of a larger brick house owned by a widow, Maria Nikolayevna Ivanova, who was selling it.

In pre-revolutionary times, this small outbuilding with outside dimensions of 53 square meters had been used as a kitchen and living quarters for the servants. It was a sturdy structure made of thick wood logs covered with clay and painted in whitewash. The roof was covered with zincified iron sheet painted over with several layers of roof paint. It had two small double-frame windows in each room, and for ventilation, one of them had a tiny hinged windowpane, called *fortochka*.

The house was divided in half by a hollow wall that incorporated a chimney connected on the side of the kitchen to a big brick stove with an oven for cooking meals, and next to it was a brick baking oven. In the other room, on the wall, high above the baking oven, was a hollow opening, called *over-the-stove*, or

na-pyechy, which in the old peasants' cottages was used as a warm sleeping chamber, but we thought it would be a nice storage space.

On one side of the house, there was a wooden porch, part of which was enclosed and served as an entrance hall to the kitchen. Inside the porch all around the walls were shelves for storage, and there was a space for a huge wooden barrel to store water, which had to be brought in with buckets from a draw-well located across the railroad tracks a few houses down on the other side of the street. In the ceiling of the porch, there was a trap door, through which one could climb on a ladder to the storage space in the attic that had a finished clay floor.

The rest of the porch was not enclosed and was surrounded by lilac bushes, and a cherry tree was growing very close to the corner of the house. Across the path from the porch, there was a detached wooden summer kitchen that had a brick stove with an oven. And on the other side of the house, there was a separate entrance with steep steps leading under the house into a deep, large, and cool cellar for storage and preservation of food, produce, and other perishable provisions.

In front and on the side of the house, there were 350 square meters of a courtyard with thick growth of raspberry bushes all along the brick wall of the neighboring schoolhouse. In the back of the house, there were 937 square meters of a vegetable garden; at one end was an outhouse, and on the other end, there was a long wood shed for storing wood and coal and for housing chickens. The shed was divided in half, with 47 square meters each, that we shared with the widow.

All this was fenced on all sides with a gate leading to the other part of that property—2,473 square meters⁵ of a fruit garden, which was in a neglected state, full of tall weeds. From the words of the widow who owned it, the care of the garden had stopped when her husband died about ten years ago. Seeing such a large garden, we wondered how she was able to keep it from being taken by the state. She said that the local government had never expressed any interest in that garden, although part of it was right in back of the elementary school. Probably being in such a neglected and wild state, it didn't attract the attention of the Soviet or party bosses.

For this property, Ivanova was asking five thousand rubles.

We consulted with my father to see if it was worth that much and asked him if he could help us with some cash because we didn't have the whole amount. My father approved our purchase and gave us a loan that we promised to repay promptly.

On August 23, 1938, we made an agreement⁶ to purchase the property from Maria Nikolayevna Ivanova for five thousand rubles and paid her in cash at the signing of the Sale and Purchase Agreement in the presence of a notary, and we paid a state tax of thirty-five rubles at the time of the transaction.

It was one of the happiest days for our family when we moved from the apartment on Kalinin Street to our own house. As soon as we settled down inside the house, all three of us, my husband, I, and our fifteen-year-old daughter, started immediately, and with great enthusiasm, clearing the fruit garden. We hoped to finish the work before the winter.

Crawling on our knees, we pulled high weeds out with our bare hands, trying to get as much of the roots as we could. Then we dug up the whole garden to break up the hard surface soil and to destroy weeds by removing the rest of the deep roots. My husband trimmed all old dry branches from the trees and brushed all the trunks with slack lime to kill the insects. And, at the end, we cleared up the old paths between the tree rows. Even without the leaves, which had fallen in the autumn, the garden looked clean and neat as a well-cared-for garden should look at that time of the year. After all our efforts to bring this garden into a cultivated state, we had great hope in our hearts and minds that our dreams of having a beautiful garden would come true in the spring.

Indeed, our labors were not lost. The spring arrived, and all the trees were blooming. One could not recognize the old garden. It was a pleasure to come home after a full day of work and to enjoy the evening in our own beautiful garden among the flowering and sweet-smelling fruit trees. The aroma emanating from the blooming cherry, apple, pear, apricot, and plum trees filled the air during the entire spring season, since the trees did not all flower at the same time. And all the petals falling from the flowers covered the garden grounds with a soft pale-pink and white carpet. We felt when we were in our garden that we were in our own private paradise. Being there, we forgot the gloomy reality of our existence, which kept us in constant tension. Indeed

in our garden, we were able to relax for a while and really forget everything in the world.

But our rejoicing was short-lived. We were not aware when we purchased the property that the older children from the nearby orphanage had poor supervision and were free to roam the backyards in a large area of the neighborhood. The flowering trees immediately attracted their attention, and they attacked our garden by climbing the trees and breaking the flowering branches. The widow, who sold us the property and who lived in the big house facing the street, told us that this was the work of the orphans.

Things got worse when the fruits started to appear on the trees. The vandals were stripping the green unripe fruit, giving it a bite or two, and throwing it on the ground. Then, in a rage that they could not eat the bitter fruit, they would punish the innocent trees by breaking the branches and scattering them around the garden. Every afternoon on our return home from school and work, we would find several of our beautiful trees mangled by the young vandals. It was impossible to catch them and to report them to their supervisors because they carefully selected times when we were not home. Without proof there was no way we could accuse them. In desperation, I complained to the Town Militia, but they answered me with a sneer, "We do not guard private gardens!"

Well, my husband decided that it was not too late to save our garden—we would build a high fence all around to protect it. We found a retired bricklayer who promised us to work fast together with his sons to complete the fence before the fruit started to ripen. To deter the vandals, he proposed the right height of the brick wall, and to discourage them climbing over the fence, he suggested incorporating pieces of broken glass bottles on the top, to which my husband agreed. The bricklayers worked in shifts from very early in the morning until dark, with the sons getting there after their full day's work elsewhere.

Because during most of the summer the men were working around the garden all day, the vandals couldn't do much damage to the trees, and we had a good harvest in the fall. All three of us had worked hard throughout the summer taking care of both fruit and vegetable gardens and were very busy in the fall harvesting the fruits of our labor. We made lots of jars of all kinds of fruit

preserves, dried fruits in the sun, and filled the cellar and the attic with crates full of apples and pears neatly stored for the winter. And in the house, under the tables and beds, we stored big pumpkins and some kind of hard pears that required a warm place to ripen slowly in the winter.

We also had a good harvest of potatoes that we stored in the big wooden crate—enough for the whole winter. We collected enough corn to feed our chickens through the next harvest and several bags of sunflower seeds to make our own sunflower oil and to eat roasted seeds in the winter. We pickled our cucumbers, tomatoes, and cabbage in the wood barrels placed in the cellar. And we filled our cellar with cabbage heads, beets, and carrots. In addition, we sold the produce to our friends, neighbors, and acquaintances.

But the beauty of the garden in the spring, the building of the brick fence, and the abundance of the harvest didn't escape the attention of the Communist Party vigilantes. The first one who noticed our garden was Comrade Oksanchenko, the censor of the local newspaper where my husband was working as a proofreader. He asked my husband several times to sell him a portion of the garden. Because we didn't want even to hear about it, he tried to scare us by telling that we would hardly be able to keep it and use it for a long time, since it was too big for private ownership. But I told him that this garden had been in private use for many years and there was no reason why it should suddenly be taken from us. After this, he stopped bothering us.

It was well known that, after the revolution, all land was nationalized. Individuals were allowed ownership of single-family houses costing not more than a certain amount, but they could not own the land on which the house and other auxiliary structures stood and the land adjacent to the house that was used by the owners to cultivate fruit and vegetable gardens. For the use of land, all were required to pay rent to the government. We also knew that there were certain restrictions on the amount of land that individuals were allowed to cultivate. When we were buying the house and the garden, we assumed that, since it had for twenty years not been taken from others who'd cultivated it, or from Maria Nikolayevna, who did not cultivate it, it meant that it was a legal-size garden.

In the summer of 1939, I was summoned to the office of

Comrade Byelokonye, the head of the Department of People's Education of the Town of Slavyansk. When I entered his office he blatantly announced, "We are requesting that you give up your garden for use by the Elementary School Number 6." When I started to protest against such an unjust order, Comrade Byelokonye categorically stated, "The land belongs to the state, and we are in charge."

"No, you cannot take it from us," I continued to protest. "I, with all my family, worked very hard to put that garden in an orderly condition, to make out of the wild growth a beautiful and cultivated fruit garden. Why didn't you take it before when it was wild and neglected?"

"It doesn't matter—we can request it at any time. The land belongs to the state," he repeated over and over the same words.

"And how about the trees?" I asked him. "I paid for them when I bought the house and the garden. And how about the brick fence that we just built around the garden to protect it from vandals?"

To this he answered cynically, "You may remove your trees and your fence and take them with you."

I left the office telling him defiantly, "I will never give up my garden!"

The back of the Elementary School Number 6 had a garden lot that bordered our fruit garden. To the shame of Comrade Byelokonye, who lived in another building in the courtyard of the same school, the school garden was in the same neglected state ours was before we cleaned it up. Because of its wild state, the pupils were not allowed to use it.

"Damn him, impudent Communist!" I exploded angrily, recounting my encounter with Byelokonye to my husband. "Now that we have put this garden in order, he wants it for himself to enjoy in the evenings and to harvest the fruits in the fall. Do you seriously believe that he will ever allow the pupils to play in the garden?"

"Of course not," replied my husband, "but what can we do? You cannot fight the communist boss. If you start a fight, he will find a way to hush you up. Or even worse, he would start to investigate you and me, and we would have to run again to another town."

"No!" I replied stubbornly. "I will fight for my garden! I will

fight!"

The interesting part of this whole story was that the principal of the Elementary School Number 6 was Katya Grudzinskaya,⁷ my first cousin on my mother's side, a daughter of my Uncle Fedya.

She lived in the same house in the apartment next to Byelokonye. When I went to see her and asked about who was behind all of this sudden decision of annexing my garden to the school garden, she didn't know anything about it. She was as surprised as I was and swore to me that Byelokonye had never asked her opinion about the need of adding another piece to the school garden.

"Dear Tonyechka," my cousin told me sincerely, "what will I do with the additional garden when we don't use the one we already have? They don't give me people to clean up that wilderness, which is full of debris from being neglected from the revolution time. I stopped asking about it, long before Byelokonye became my boss. And in the condition that land is in now, I cannot allow my pupils to go and play there; it is not safe." Then she added, "Please don't mention what I told you to anybody. Don't get me in trouble. I could lose my position if they found out that I talked to you. I think that until this matter is resolved, it will be better that we don't see each other... And for God's sake, don't tell anyone that we are cousins! But I wanted you to know that I have nothing to do with it."

My family continued to persuade me not to quarrel with the authorities, because they were afraid that I could be arrested for putting up a resistance to the orders of the Soviet and communist authority. My husband insisted that I stop this nonsense, because he was convinced that, if I continued, the authorities would definitely start to investigate his White Army past.

All my friends and many people in town knew all about what was happening and were closely following how my fight would end. Many were shaking their heads and telling me, "Spit on that garden! It's not worth it! You are asking to be put away in prison or even to be sent to Siberia!" But I was unshaken by all these predictions of gloom and was not giving up. One of the reasons for my tenacity was that I couldn't understand why the local authorities were trying to make me give up my garden voluntarily. Why didn't they just take it over by force? What was

preventing them from doing it?

But they were not giving up the fight, either; indeed, it began to flare up. Several commissions came to see our garden, its location, and size. One time, the Chief of the Town Militsia came and was astonished by the beauty and the size of the garden. He made a caustic remark, "What kind of rich landowners are living here right in the center of the town? How can such things happen in the twentieth year after the revolution?"

I answered him, "Comrade Militsionyer,⁸ people here work hard with their own hands to make this garden cultivated and productive."

Then, one day, two men came from the Provincial Department of Agriculture. They inspected the conditions of the trees and measured our garden. While one of them was writing their report, the other came to talk with me. He asked, "Who is working in your garden?"

I answered, "The three of us—my husband, I, and our daughter."

"You don't hire anybody to help you?"

"No. We don't need any help; we do it all ourselves."

"Well, in your case, you should not give up your garden."

I looked at him with disbelief. And he added, "Listen carefully, and don't tell anybody that I told you this. The law of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, which was passed on February 17, 1927, allowed citizens owning a house in the towns to have up to 1,820 square meters of the adjacent land, which they could use as a courtyard and for vegetable and fruit gardens. There is a new provision for cultivated gardens adjacent to the houses if the owners themselves cultivate them. The new provision states that, unless the land is kept unproductive, the government cannot confiscate the cultivated gardens of reasonable size and cannot take them without the permission of the property owner. In order to take it from you, the government would need your consent. In our report, it will be stated that your garden is up to the highest standards required for the cultivated garden."

I could not believe that such good persons were still living in this God-forsaken country. "How can I thank you for your advice?" I asked him with humility.

"There is no need for it. I am an agriculturist, not a politician.

My concern is for the garden that you keep in such good care. I do not want to see it becoming abandoned as the school garden next to yours is."

Later I found out that this exception to the law was made for the purpose of encouraging the production of fruits and vegetables for the market, which was not sufficiently supplied with produce by the collective and state-owned farms. Learning about this new provision to the law soon became very important for me. Knowing that a cultivated garden couldn't be requisitioned from me without my consent, I decided that I would never give it up without a fight.

Since I was not giving up my garden voluntarily to the town government, the case was transferred to the Provincial Executive Committee of the Soviet Delegates from Workers, Peasants, and Red Army Men, located in the town of Stalino. I was summoned to appear before the Presidium of the Provincial Executive Committee, where I had to undergo an inquiry regarding my insubordination to the decisions of the Town Soviet authorities.

On the seventh of July, 1939, I arrived at the building of the Provincial Soviet, where I was escorted to the balcony at the end of a huge hall full of Provincial Soviet Delegates, whom we, the voters, supposedly had elected to represent us and to defend our interests. I was left there standing alone and was subjected to questioning by members of the Executive Committee, who were sitting at the podium and by the delegates sitting in the hall.

I had to answer numerous and preposterous questions, which had nothing to do with my case:

"Who was your father before the revolution?"

"Where he is now?"

"Why was the house purchased in your name and not in your husband's name?"

"Where is your husband employed?"

"How did you manage to have the money to buy a house?"

"Why have you built a brick fence around the garden?"

"Why did you build such a high fence around your garden?"

"Why have you put broken glass on the top of the fence?"

"Were you not concerned that children could cut themselves climbing over the fence?"

The elected Provincial Soviet delegates assaulted me like birds of prey with their accusations and, pointing their fingers at me,

they were all repeating the same things but in different ways: "The land belongs to the state!" "You have no rights to the land!"

Not even one voice was heard saying anything in my defense or in the defense of the new provision of the law protecting the cultivated gardens. All of the delegates were trying either to convince me to voluntarily give up my garden to the state or trying to scare me with their questions.

Then somebody suggested a compromise; they asked me if I would agree to give up voluntarily the larger part of the garden adjacent to the school and keep the smaller part of it, which is adjacent to my courtyard. I answered, "No, I would not." All this time I had only to answer their questions. I was not given the opportunity to defend my case or to bring the attention of the delegates to the existing law, which I was prepared to mention as a defense for my decision.

At the end of the inquiry, the Chairman of the Executive Committee asked me if I was ready to agree to give up my garden to the state voluntarily. But I was firm with my decision and answered without hesitation, "No! I am not giving up my garden. I will never give up my dream!"

The chairman announced laconically, "The inquiry is closed. You shall receive our written resolution to confiscate your garden in favor of the school. You may go." With those words, I was dismissed.

The conduct of the inquiry and the resolution of the case didn't satisfy me, and I left the Assembly of the Provincial Soviet Delegates with a bitter resentment of injustice. On my way home, on the train, I started to plan my next move to vindicate my garden. "After all," I thought, "the law is on my side, and I have only to find the right place or maybe the right person who can help me to uphold that law. Yes, the right person! Of course, I know the right person, and he is a very important person in the Ukraine." By the time I arrived home, I had already decided to write a letter to my former student, Nikita Khrushchev, who at that time was already the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic and the Candidate of the Central Politburo of the Communist Party.

In the last week of July, I received a notice from the office of the Seven-Year School Number 3, where I worked. They notified me that they had received an important letter for me from the

Office of the Town Soviet. I knew immediately that it would be a copy of the official document and rushed to the school office. Indeed, it was a Resolution of the Presidium of Stalino's Provincial Executive Committee⁹ about the detachment of land from our garden, and I hurried home to read it with my husband.

We studied the resolution carefully; the provincial authorities concluded that, according to the norm established by the USSR Government, the gardens in use by the citizens in towns cannot exceed 1,820 square meters and, therefore, ordered the Slavyansk Town's Soviet to expropriate about half of our garden, or exactly 1,656 square meters, and allocate it to the School No. 6. This was much less than Byelokonye expected to get, but it was also not what I was willing to give him. In addition, the Town Soviet was ordered to compensate us for the portion of the fence that was adjacent to the expropriated portion of the garden according to the governmental prices, which meant much less than what we paid for it. Of course, I was not satisfied. But my husband was almost relieved that maybe the problem would end and there would not be any revenge by Byelokonye and no inquiries into his past. He urged me to compromise and not to pursue my quest for justice.

But now that I had in my possession a copy of the official document, in which I was informed by the Stalino's Provincial Executive Committee that a portion of my garden would be taken from me, I could proceed with my next move. I made the copy of this "Resolution" that I had just received. Then, I wrote a letter to my former student. In my letter to Nikita Khrushchev, I explained all the details of my case, including the mock inquiry in Stalino, and mentioned the new provision to the old law regarding the cultivated gardens. I also reminded him that once I was his teacher, but now I was asking him to be my teacher, because he was more knowledgeable than I was about the laws, and he could give me advice about what I had to do in my case. In conclusion, I asked him to help me solve my case with fairness and according to the law of the land and, if necessary, to punish the guilty ones, no matter who they were—myself or those who had been unfair to me.

To be sure that the letter would be delivered to its destination, I didn't drop it in the mailbox in our town but took the local train to the Slavyansk Station and put it in the mailbox of the mail car

on the train going to Kiev. This was at the end of July of 1939.

By this time, the invisible hands of the vandals were systematically demolishing the brick fence of our garden. They were working with real tools supplied by some anonymous sponsor whose objective was to destroy the brick fence and to show us that we could not win our garden back intact. The way that the destruction of the brick fence was done showed, without doubt, that it was well organized and guided by somebody very competent who had control over the teenage vandals. There was no doubt that the only person who could give such an order was Comrade Byelokonye, who, as the head of the Department of People's Education of the Town of Slavyansk, was in charge of the orphanage. But there was no way to prove it because the Town Militia told me before that they do not protect private gardens.

Meanwhile, the vandals got better and better in their demolition skills. First, they were making large holes at the base of the fence by pounding and breaking up the cemented bricks with picks or pickaxes. Then, they were moving up the wall until the sections of the fence could be pushed to the ground, leaving piles of broken bricks.

After the first opening in the fence was made, the vandals started in the same systematic way as with the brick fence to destroy the fruit trees. My heart was wrung with pain, and my soul was afflicted with anguish to see how the branches of the trees full of ripening fruits were savagely torn from the tree trunks and scattered on the ground. It seemed to me that cruel fate was laughing at my dream of having a beautiful garden. There was no end to my severe suffering, and my nerves were worn out.

From Nikita Khrushchev there was no answer, but I had a feeling in my heart that I should not lose my hope. I always remembered him to be on the side of the oppressed peasants when we were reading Pushkin's novel in my class at the Rabfak. In this case, I hoped that he would perceive that I was the oppressed.

Late in the fall, I was suddenly summoned to the office of the same communist Byelokonye who was the first to announce to me that they were taking my garden from me. When I entered his office, he was sitting at his desk and, without answering my greeting or raising his head to look at me, he announced with an

angry voice, “We don’t need your garden! You may keep it! A decision was made to leave it for your use.”

With an inflection of innocence in my voice, I asked him, “To whom should I be thankful for this decision?”

“It doesn’t matter,” was his short and dry answer. And he dismissed me by cutting my audience short, “You may go!”

The news about my victory spread very quickly around the town. My friends notified me that the Town Communist Party Committee had received a letter with a severe reprimand to those who deserved it for the way the local authorities had handled the case with my garden. I understood that this was an answer by Nikita Khrushchev to my letter.

Had he done it from his magnanimity or because he had really understood the rightfulness of my actions? Or maybe he remembered my sincere willingness to help him to learn when he was my student seventeen years ago. Maybe both reasons were partially true. But most likely, Nikita Khrushchev wanted to act like the popular hero whom he admired. I remembered how Nikita enjoyed the actions of Yemyelyan Pugachev,¹⁰ who, after he obtained power, pardoned the officer Gryn'yev, who'd fought against him, for the favor he'd received from him in the past. And he bragged before him, “You see, I am not such a bloodsucker as they say about me in your ‘landowners clan.’”

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1. Stalin’s military purges, which began in 1937 and lasted until the beginning of World War Two, decimated most of the Red Army senior commanders and contributed to the defeats at the beginning of the war when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union in 1941.
 2. See the chapter “Return to My Hometown of Slavyansk.”
 3. See the chapter “The Newspaper’s Proofreader.”
 4. The Young Communards Street—A former *Zhelyesnodorozhnaya*—Railroad Street.
 5. From the “Plan of the Property,” “The Agreement,” and the “Property Registration.”
 6. See in the Appendix: Document in the chapter: “A Fight for Our Garden.”
 7. Yekaterina Fyedorovna Grudzinsky, cousin of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky, a daughter of Fyodor Iosifovich Grudzinsky, her

mother's brother.

8. Militsiaman.
9. Document written in Ukrainian.
10. A popular hero from the novel "Captain's Daughter" by the famous Russian poet and writer Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin.



Teachers Conference in Kiev

By Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky

It was the spring of 1940. Outside it was still cool, but the sun was already caressing the earth and lifting all hearts with its warm rays. I was in Kiev attending the first All Ukrainian Conference for the Improvement of the Professional Skills of Teachers. It was an unusual conference, the first one of its kind, and significant in its objectives. It was intended to serve as a starting event for the creation of the Institute for the Improvement of the Professional Skills of Teachers in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

All the best creative and experienced teachers were to have been assembled for that conference, like an experimental pedagogical laboratory. It was also significant because the delegates were selected in the capital city of Kiev in the Ukrainian Commissariat of People's Education on the merits of the papers presented by the teachers, and not as usual by the local authorities, who selected the delegates according to their Communist Party membership cards.¹

In the beginning of the school year, the Ukrainian Commissariat of People's Education had mailed to all schools and Town People's Education Curriculum Departments a letter in which the teachers were invited to write a methodological paper describing the experience of teaching their subject matter to their pupils. They were to submit these papers directly to the Commissariat of People's Education in Kiev, bypassing all local authorities. The instructions were given to all schools, and copies were distributed to all teachers.

I liked the idea from the start, since I felt that I had a lot to share with the other teachers about my experience. Without much pondering, I decided to conduct an experiment with my pupils and to write a paper describing the whole process from start to finish. Indeed, a creative fever seized my mind, and I was sitting

up late at night, working tirelessly on my project. It was something transcending an ambition or a self-interest that was driving me to work so hard. I felt like my mind was compelling an outflow of creative ideas originating from my knowledge of subject matter and years of experience. My brain was hungry for the mental nourishment and stimulation that I was receiving from this creative work.

No matter how absurd it may sound, in the nightmarish years of Stalin's era, notwithstanding the hard conditions of life, constant material deprivations, moral humiliations, and political censorship, the human intellect was not completely destroyed, and the section of the population, called intelligentsia, that had survived through all of these hardships and impediments, was moving forward in all areas of knowledge.

The experimental work with my pupils had the title "How to Teach Seventh Grade Pupils to Write a Composition." As a theme for a composition, I selected a politically correct but factual, historical event from the civil war, "A Defense of the Town of Tsarytsyn."² I prepared a plan and step-by-step instructions for writing a well-organized composition, and then explained and guided my pupils in their work on this assignment. Pupils were assigned to find materials in the library related to the topic, to read about this historical event, to look at pictures illustrating the battle, and to find the location of the town on the map. In addition, I organized a trip for the whole class to the local Workers Club, where a veteran of this battle shared his battlefield experiences with them.

The pupils were required to write their composition using the information from all these sources following the specific outline for the short story, to use the new words they learned, and to make a picture to illustrate one of the episodes that they described.

My pupils knew that this work would be submitted by me to the Commissariat of People's Education in Kiev and were trying to do their best. We all worked hard, and it was worth it. What a great satisfaction I felt reading the well-written compositions! And I was so happy seeing that my objectives were accomplished with such success. At that moment I became aware that a teacher could have the same deep feelings of accomplishment by seeing the results of her own work, as does an artist, or a poet, or a

painter.

I mailed my paper to the Ukrainian Commissariat of People's Education in Kiev. It included a description of the assignment, its planning, step-by-step instructions, and guidance of pupils during the composition process, as well as several of the best compositions by my pupils. I was so sure that my work was well done that it didn't surprise me when I received a notice from the Commissariat that my methodological paper had been accepted and that I had been selected as a delegate to the conference. It included the date when I had to arrive in Kiev and all the instructions for the conference and lodging.

I went immediately to the Slavyansk Department of People's Education to notify them about it and to request funds for the trip. Comrade Byelokonye was surprised to see the notice from the Ukrainian Commissariat of People's Education and said to me that he didn't know that anybody from his office had submitted my name as a candidate for this conference. "We will ask for clarification from Kiev and will let you know about our decision," he answered. When the time for the conference was nearing, I went once more to ask about the funds, but this time I was not admitted to the office to see Comrade Byelokonye; instead his secretary told me, "A decision has not been made yet. You will be notified later."

"But I have to be in Kiev in a few days," I insisted.

"Well, I cannot help you in this," she replied. "If you want to go, you will probably have to pay your own way."

And I did just that—I paid for the train ticket myself.

When I arrived in Kiev, I found many delegates to the conference. All was organized very well, and we received a schedule of all the events. We were housed in the hotel, and all meals were provided for us in the cafeteria. The conference was held in the Palace of the Soviets.

I remember seeing one of the teachers of Russian language from Slavyansk attempting to enter the conference hall, but since he didn't have papers identifying him as a delegate, the ushers did not admit him. Later I found out that Byelokonye had decided to send him instead of me to Kiev and paid for his trip. I was sorry for the teacher because he was an old and respected member of the profession and had a reputation for being a good teacher, but regretfully he hadn't submitted any papers and,

therefore, could not be admitted to the conference as a delegate.

I presented my work to the assembly of the best teachers selected as delegates from the whole Ukraine, and my paper was included in a published collection of works of "The First All Ukrainian Conference for the Improvement of Professional Skills of Teachers." As a result of participating in this conference, I was elected as a member of the Branch of the Institute for the Improvement of Professional Skills of Teachers located in our regional capital, the city of Stalino (formerly Yuzovka, now renamed Donetsk).

After the conference I was returning with the other delegates to the hotel. We were traveling on the bus to Podol that would stop near the hotel where we were housed. Like all other teachers, I was still excited about the conference and could hardly observe what was going on around me. Finally, the beautiful place, Kreshchatik, attracted my attention, and I was admiring it through the window.

Suddenly, I felt that somebody was very carefully touching me on my shoulder. I turned and saw a woman wearing a gray, warm shawl on her head. She was looking at me in a somewhat strange way; I couldn't figure out if she was trying to smile or was ready to cry. Almost at once we both recognized each other and exclaimed, "Ulya!" "Tonya!"

What a surprise, I thought, and moved to the seat next to her. To start a conversation, I asked her, "Do you live here, Ulya?"

"Yes," she answered, and then added with a quavering voice, "We have moved here quite recently."

"Where have you lived before?"

"We lived in the city of Kharkov." She emitted a deep sigh and added, "You know, I had a big misfortune... Styopa..."

"Yes," I interrupted her, "by the way, how is he?" At that moment I had arrived at my bus stop and moved to the exit door.

Ulya followed me out of the bus like she didn't want me to leave her. "Let's go to this public garden," she suggested, "and let's sit for a while and talk."

We sat on the bench, and she recounted to me about her life and about Styopa Bolotov.³

"It's hard to talk about it, but now he is all right," she started hesitantly. "But, you know, he was recovering for two years before in the Saburova Dacha in Kharkov."

"What happened to him? Why?" I asked her, astonished with such news because I knew that it was an asylum for the insane.

"He became crazy," replied Ulya. And she explained further, "You know, he was unlucky with the revolution, which, he thought, would give him the opportunity to raise himself up. Every time he tried to make something of himself, he could not succeed. He attempted to study and, although I tried to help him, he couldn't make it. Well, finally he tried to work in 'that place'—you understand?" And, although there was nobody around us, she whispered, "The KGB.⁴ They forced him to do their dirty work 'there.' After several years he couldn't stand it any more and started to talk nonsense... He was imagining all the time that his hands were covered with blood, and he was constantly washing them." She stopped and dried her tears.

I asked her, "Is he working now?"

"Yes. Now he works as a master tailor in the tailoring artel⁵, and he also teaches young apprentices. He often remembers well about your father. He told me that at least from him he had learned a trade. He repeats often, 'Finally, I have honest and clean work.'"

She looked at me almost calmed after pouring her grief out to somebody who, she thought, could understand her. I was sitting beside her, not knowing what to tell her, as in my mind scenes were flashing of Styopa and Ulya in my father's home insulting and humiliating me there. I couldn't feel even the slightest pity for him, but I was sincerely sorry for Ulya.

She interrupted the uneasy silence, "And your father, is he still alive?"

"Yes, he lives in Slavyansk again," I emphasized the word "again."

"Well, and how are you, Tonya? Where are you living now?"

"I also live in my hometown Slavyansk. I came here for the Teachers Conference." And I gave her a report about my work and proudly said, "Five hundred teachers listened to my teaching experience!" I could not stop from telling her how warmly I was greeted by the delegates and about the general excitement at the conference. "I was only sorry that Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev could not come to the conference. It seems that he went to visit *kolkhozes* in the country." Then I added, without hiding my pride and trying to brag in front of her about my famous student. "Do

you know that he was my student?"

Hesitating and with slight disbelief in her voice, Ulya asked, "Oh? Ye-e-s?" Then she added, "They say here in Kiev that this muzhik is busying himself and losing no time mixing himself in the mighty clique in Moscow. That he is eager to snap up every opportunity to seize power. They also say that he is pushy, persistent, cunning like a fox, and an artful politician. No wonder they call him 'Cunning Nykyta,'" she said his name in Ukrainian, which sounded funnier than in Russian.

I was not sure at all about how to react to Ulya's sharp comments about Comrade Khrushchev. It sounded to me like she was envious of his political success compared to the failures of her husband Styopa. But you could never be sure if this was not a provocation to make me talk and maybe criticize the communist leader. After all, she admitted that Styopa had worked for the KGB. I just allowed the topic to come to an end without any comments, good or bad, and then got up to leave.

Ulya took my hand and with tears in her eyes told me, "You are a fine woman, Tonya. I am sorry that I offended you the last time I saw you in your father's home. Maybe you still remember that I called you 'rotten intelligentsia...' Well, I was wrong. You made something of yourself—all those years of studying were not lost."

I didn't answer anything but just kissed her on the cheek and quickly walked toward the hotel across the street. When I was climbing the steps, I turned back and saw Ulya still standing near the bench and looking at me.

On my return home, I submitted to the Slavyansk Department of People's Education a request for reimbursement of my expenses for the professional trip, documented with the railroad ticket stub and my conference delegate pass stamped by the Ukrainian Commissariat of People's Education. I received reimbursement for all my expenses without any delay and without any questions about the conference.

Although Slavyansk Department of People's Education was notified that I'd been elected to be a member of the Branch of the Institute for the Improvement of Professional Skills of the Teachers located in our provincial capital, the city of Stalino, this news was not given to the local newspaper, as it was usually done in cases of party members or their cronies, and it was never

acknowledged officially at any of the local teachers meetings.

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1. See the chapter “Fight for Our Garden.”
 2. Civil War between the Reds and the White Russian Army in 1919–1921.
 3. See the chapters “In Whose Name?” and “The Tragic Refuge.”
 4. KGB—Komitet of Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti—Committee for the State Security.
 5. A co-operative of artisans.



Becoming Conscious of My Political Views

By Olga Gladky Verro

During my childhood and early teen years, I perceived from my father the emotionally charged clues about the bad people and the wrong actions that were connected with them. My mother always reminded my father to be careful that I wouldn't hear his angry outbursts such as "That damned Communist is trying to get rid of me!" or his resentful accusations such as "Those red devils, Bolsheviks, have destroyed our poor Russia!" Or his unfavorable comments such as, "This detested Soviet system!" Or his bitter complaints such as, "Those hated NKVD dogs are again on my trail."

But my father was not always successful in concealing these things, especially when he was very upset with somebody or with some event. I wanted to know what was bothering him and would carefully listen to what he was telling my mother in a very subdued voice when I was already in bed and they believed that I was asleep. Very slowly his opinions and beliefs took hold in my developing mind, and I began to form some perceptions of "who" and "what" was bad or evil. But I also knew that I should not talk about these things with anybody because it would hurt my father.

Then, when I was in the ninth grade, I suddenly became aware of my political opinions that, not surprisingly, were in accord with my father's views. A very unusual event happened during the second half of the year and interrupted the monotony of the school days. One day, our ninth-grade and tenth-grade classes were gathered for the meeting on the second-floor assembly hall. At that time most of the pupils in our class were between sixteen and seventeen years old. This was the age at which the Communist Party was intensively recruiting youth to become members of the *Komsomol*.¹ On the stage, at the table covered with a red cloth, sat our School Director, the Communist Comrade

Malikova, and one young man who seemed to be only a few years older than the pupils of the tenth-grade class.

Comrade Malikova got up from the chair and presented the young man to us, "Pupils of the ninth- and tenth-grade, this is Comrade Nikolay Dyeryuzhkin, the *Komsomol* organizer, who was appointed by the Regional *Komsomol* Committee as the secretary of the *Komsomol* cell of our Ten-Years-School Number 15."

Comrade Dyeryuzhkin got up and waved in his raised right hand the red *Komsomol* membership card. He began a propaganda speech consisting of the standard communist slogans and exaltations of the deeds of the Bolsheviks. He concluded his speech with the call to all of us, "Our beloved Communist Party expects all Soviet youth to join the ranks of the young communists who are the vanguard of young builders of Communism! I am sure that all of you are eager to become members of the *Komsomol* and to proudly hold the *Komsomol* membership card." And in a sweeping slow motion he waved the red card several times, as if he wanted to be sure that everybody could see it. Then he added with a reassuring voice, "I will be sitting here at the table all afternoon to register new members. Anyone who is ready to register now may come to the stage, and those who need to be in class may feel free to ask your teachers any time to allow you to come here to register."

The school director adjourned the meeting. Some pupils from the tenth grade went up right away onto the stage and formed a line to register. But the majority of the pupils just stood in small groups talking in unusually subdued voices. I saw my friend Zoya Litvinova² standing with her friends and classmates from the tenth-grade class, Musya³ Revsina and Olga Chernyavskaya.⁴ I told Syma, "Let's join them and listen to what they are saying."

They were commenting that, since they were graduating at the end of this school year, it was very important for them to be members of the *Komsomol* to increase their chances for acceptance into the institutes⁵ of their choice. It was known that, in addition to academic achievement and the entrance-exams competition, membership in the *Komsomol* was a very important factor that was considered for admission into the prestigious institutions of higher learning.

Zoya said that she would first talk about it with her mother

and with her boyfriend, Zhenya⁶ Kozyryev. Olga Chernyavskaya also said that she should seek the opinion of her parents and her boyfriend, David Gorelik.

As I was listening to their comments, it flashed through my mind, *I would never become a member of Komsomol. Never!* But, of course, I knew that I couldn't tell this to anybody. Already deeply imbedded in my mind were my father's not-too-subtle expressions about the evils of the Communist Party. I couldn't tell them that membership in an organization affiliated with the Communist Party was against my principles. I just made a neutral comment, "I have almost two years ahead of me before applying for admission to the institute and have plenty of time to think about it." Syma nodded her head, agreeing with my idea.

On the stage I saw several of my classmates standing in line, waiting to be registered. Among the first in line were the two girlfriends Raya⁷ Kyrychenko and Valya⁸ Lysykhina; they were inseparable friends, and in the classroom, they also sat together at the same desk in the row near the windows. Also, farther in line were the two girlfriends Raya⁹ Gunicheva and Lora¹⁰ Krylova, and next to them were the two girls belonging to the obnoxious clique, their ringleader Olga¹¹ Krasnaya and one of her closest followers, Sonya¹² Tryet'yakova. Of course, one couldn't miss the tall Vovka Dobry, who was taking photographs of the special event for our class wall-newspaper. I couldn't see any other boys from our class standing in line at that time.

Although Kostya, Yasha, and Syma were my friends, we never talked among ourselves about politics at all. I didn't dare express to them my disdain for the Communist Party or for the *Komsomol* membership because I learned very early in my childhood that talking about it could hurt my father and mother. And I knew that Yasha's father used to be a revolutionary; I didn't know anything about Kostya's father's and mother's political affiliations. At that time neither of them joined the *Komsomol* right away, but both of them eventually joined the organization. Later when the question about my membership came up, I just gave them the same neutral explanation—that I had plenty of time to make that decision.

After a few days, comrade Dyeryuzhkin ordered the first meeting of the *Komsomol* cell of the Ten-Years-School Number 15. At that meeting the secretaries of the *Komsomol* cells of each class were elected, and Raya Kyrychenko was elected as a secretary of

our ninth-grade class. After being elected, she began to behave as if she were a very important person and spoke with the pupils with the authority bestowed on her by the *Komsomol*. She adopted the usual Communist Party propaganda to recruit more pupils to become members of the *Komsomol*. She was successful at that time in convincing some of the boys and girls to join, including the two cousins Musya¹³ Davidenko and Lena¹⁴ Tarasenko, who sat at the desk in front of her.

Before this happened, I had admired Raya Kyrychenko very much for her dignified demeanor and because, although she had an exclusive friend, Valya Lysykhina, she was always friendly with most pupils in our class, but she didn't give too much confidence to anybody. She behaved and appeared more mature than the other girls in our class.

I considered her to be pretty. Her face was nicely adorned by neat, medium-length hair of a dark-brown shade, which she styled with light waves. She always wore outfits without frills, a straight skirt, and classic shirts that were neatly ironed and varied in colors. At some point in my experiments in writing poetry, I wrote an ode addressed to her that elevated her as an example of impeccable character and appearance. She was very pleased with my verse but didn't change her behavior toward me. However, after she became the secretary of the *Komsomol* cell of our ninth-grade class and had changed her behavior by acting as an authority in her activity of recruiting new members, I was disappointed with her and she lost, in my eyes, that aura I had attributed to her earlier.

In the spring of 1939, our garden was in full bloom, and, sometimes before going to school, my friends Syma, Yasha, Kostya, and I would go there to enjoy its beauty and admire the wonder of nature. We often did our homework outside on our porch near the cherry tree that was covered with white blossoms and the flowering bushes of lilac emanating a strong, bitter fragrance.

At the end of the school year, Kostya and I were very proud of having succeeded in tutoring our friends Syma and Yasha, who both passed the final exams of the ninth grade. We said goodbye to Kostya, who said that he was going somewhere on vacation. But I knew he was going to stay with his father for the summer because his parents were divorced when he was in the sixth

grade. Yasha was also going to visit his mother. Syma and I agreed that we would, as in the previous summers, go to Kurort to enjoy the sandy beach and the water of the Salty Lake on those days when I didn't have the mud therapy that I'd been taking for many years. Now I had also mud applications on my legs that had bothered me with pain in the winter.

With our garden, we had a great disappointment. The boys from the town orphanage had discovered our garden and begun to vandalize it by breaking the branches. Later, as the small green fruits began to appear, they began to tear them and, after biting into the sour fruits, throw them away. My mother went to the local *Militsia* headquarters asking for the apprehension of the vandals. Their answer was, "It is not our job to protect private property. Hire a watchman!" My father decided to build a brick fence around the garden. And as the mason was building the fence for the rest of the summer, and we were planting our vegetable garden at the far end of our property near the water hole formed from the accumulation of rainwater, the vandals had to stay away from it. We also watched the garden in the evening.

All through the summer we had plenty of vegetables and fruits not only for us but also for my grandfather and my Uncle Igor's family. In the fall we had a good harvest of vegetables and fruits of all kinds. I helped my mother make pickled tomatoes, cucumbers, and cabbage, and we stored them in the cold cellar under the house that had a separate entrance on one side of it.

There we also stored our potatoes, heads of cabbage, beets, carrots, onions, and garlic for the whole winter. The cobs of dry corn to feed our poultry and the sunflower seeds we stored in the attic, and the pumpkins we stored under our beds. As the fruits were maturing, my mother made all kinds of preserves that we also stored on the shelves in the cellar. We had enough provisions to last until the next summer. And we gave lots of fruits to my grandfather, to my mother's sister-in-law Musia and my Uncle Igor, who came with his whole family to gather fruits from the trees. My cousins Nanochka and Fredik had lots of fun, and my aunts also made a good provisions of preserves. And my cousin Lyalya, the daughter of my Uncle Ivan, liked to come and eat the raspberries from the bushes that grew all along the brick wall of the Elementary School building that stood on the borderline of our courtyard.

That summer, my father decided to make a short visit to the family of his late cousin Bonifaty Yuryevich, who lived in the town of Taganrog in the same house that belonged to my father's Aunt Marusya¹⁵. He took me with him to get to know my second cousins: Konstantin, whom we called by the nickname Kotik, and who was only one year older than I, and his much younger sister, Lyudmila.

We stayed there only a few days. And while my father was visiting with Bonifaty's wife, my cousin Kotyk showed me the old center of the town and its park. As we were walking or sitting on the bench, we were getting acquainted with each other since we had met only once when we were very small children. He complained that he didn't get along with his mother and explained, "It's very hard because we have the same personality; we are both very stubborn and don't give up easily." The next day my father, Kotik, Lyudmila, and I went to the shore of the Azov Sea, where my father took a photograph of the three of us. Our visit was short, but it was memorable for me because I liked my cousins and enjoyed their company. And Kotik gave me his photograph, which I cherished.



Konstantin (Kotik) Bonifatyevich Yuryevich, Olga's second cousin, Taganrog, Russian SSR, Soviet Union, Summer, 1939.



Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky) and second cousins, Lyudmila Bonifatyevna Yuryevich and Konstantin (Kotik) Bonifatyevich Yuryevich on the shore of the Azov Sea. Taganrog, Russian SSR, Soviet Union, Summer, 1939. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.

In the summer of 1939, shortly after we arrived from our trip to Taganrog, the saga of fighting for our garden began. The local Department of Education had decided to expropriate it from us and to annex it to the Elementary School No. 6, which bordered our property.¹⁶ There was a nerve-racking tension in our family because my mother stubbornly refused to give up the land. At that time I didn't know that the property had been purchased in the name of my mother to ensure that it would not be confiscated in case my father was arrested for his "sins" of serving in the White Army during the civil war. My mother wouldn't listen to the advice of my father and stubbornly refused to give up her garden, even after the inquiry by the Regional Executive Committee in Stalino¹⁷ and their decision to take from us not all, but a larger part of our garden. Not knowing at that time that my father feared an inquiry into his past and the reprisals that could follow, I was very surprised that he argued with my mother and tried to convince her not to fight the Soviet authorities. Not being aware of my father's past, I supported my mother's position of not giving up even a part of our garden.

At the last moment, my mother came up with the idea of writing a letter to her former student, Nikita Khrushchev, who was at that time First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine. She asked him to help her if, in her case, the law exempting expropriation of cultivated gardens could be applied.

Meanwhile, the vandals from the orphanage were systematically demolishing the newly built brick fence around our garden.

We took turns staying in the garden during the rest of the summer. But as soon as the schools started and we couldn't watch our garden during the day, the vandals managed to destroy the whole brick fence, leaving only remnants of the fence and piles of broken bricks and mortar delineating the perimeter of the garden.

At the same time, the destruction of the fruit trees continued until snow covered the ground and footprints could have led to the culprits. It was clear that someone in the local government had decided to completely destroy our garden as revenge and

was sending the orphans to do their dirty work. It was obvious that someone was directing this. The demolition was progressing at a very rapid pace, requiring coordinated group work and the use of heavy tools to pound the bricks because the boys could not do this with their bare hands.

Then late in the fall, my mother was called to the office of the local Department of Education and received the answer that they had renounced the expropriation of our garden. My mother came home and said, "Nikita Khrushchev helped!"¹⁸ It was a bitter victory for my mother. Our garden was completely destroyed. We even stopped going there to see further damage, because it was a pitiful sight—all those beautiful trees with the savagely broken branches. It broke our hearts to see all that devastation.

During the time of fighting for our garden, my parents were so outraged about the Soviet system and by the abuse of power by the Soviet officials, who were members of the Communist Party, my father cursed, "Those damned Bolsheviks sitting in the local governmental offices." My mother complained about the orphanage personnel, who didn't watch the boys. Both of them forgot completely to be careful that I wouldn't hear them and talked aloud and openly in my presence, which was unusual for them. This further reinforced my political views, because I could see with my own eyes that my parents were right in their hate and disappointment with the Bolsheviks and with the Soviet system of government.

This was a period when Germany was already beginning the conquests of the *blitzkrieg* in Europe. And in the Soviet Union there was a general air of paranoia about spies and traitors. The NKVD,¹⁹ a successor to the GPU, was active in arresting "suspected" individuals who were disappearing without any trials or explanations. The two brothers of my Uncle Igor's wife were arrested because of their German origin, written on their passports as their nationality, and their last name, "Gauk."

In the Soviet newspapers were reports about the massive purge of traitors and spies from the ranks of the Red Army officers. Soviet newspapers controlled by the Central Committee of the Communist Party were filled with propaganda slogans against the generalized, not specifically defined, "capitalist aggressors," "fascists," and "imperialists." The Soviet press was presenting the idea that all capitalist countries were against the

socialist Soviet Union, and the articles were very ambiguous in reporting the events that were going on in Europe.

My father worked in the local newspaper “Bilshovyk” as a proofreader. The editor-in-chief, the Communist Mukhin, got into a habit of delegating writing the editorials to my father. He was giving him the “politically correct” instructions on what those articles had to include, and he signed them “Editor-in-Chief Mukhin”. My father would come home and disdainfully comment, “Every day they are changing how to present the situation abroad. It is no wonder that in reading the newspapers, people are confused about who are the enemies of the Soviet Union.”

Indeed, for some time “fascists” was the stereotype name used in describing the enemies of our country. Then, after the nonaggression pact was made between Stalin and Hitler in August of 1939, suddenly the name “fascists” was not used as commonly as it had been before in the newspapers, while the terms “imperialists” and “capitalist aggressors” remained in describing the evil forces that were ready to attack the “peace-loving” Soviet Union.

The Stalin-Hitler nonaggression pact surprised and puzzled Soviet citizens, and they were even more perplexed that the Soviet press didn’t condemn the partial invasion of Western Poland by Germany. But the population was astonished by Stalin’s sudden and unexpected attack on Poland in September 1939. Recently overrun by the Germans, Poland couldn’t sustain the fight against the Red Army and was conquered in one month. The annexation of the Eastern part of Poland by the Soviet Union was applauded in the Soviet newspapers and presented to the citizens not as an act of aggression, but as a legitimate takeover of land that had belonged to Russia in the past and as a liberation of Ukrainian people living there from Polish “capitalist oppression.”

The overall preparedness for the war against the “capitalist aggressors” without naming any particular European state was a dominant theme in the newspapers, schools, and factories. In our school the military education²⁰ instructor made us march in the schoolyard and practice using gas masks. He repeated over and over the official Communist Party slogans that saturated the newspapers and were placed on placards on the walls in the school hall. All this created the general atmosphere that the Soviet

Union might eventually be involved in the war.

That year between September and October, Stalin “persuaded” the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to sign “mutual assistance” pacts that gave the Soviet Union the right to station troops, aircraft, and naval units on their territory, resulting in their de facto annexation to the USSR. Territorial concessions were also demanded from Finland, who was not as eager as its neighbors to comply with Stalin’s demands.

At the end of November, my father came home and told us about the official news that had been printed in the morning newspaper. The Soviet government was accusing the Finnish Armed Forces of making provocations on the Soviet border. My father commented, “Can you believe that a small country like Finland would provoke incidents with the Soviet Union? Lies, lies—all they know how to print are lies! How could one believe what this Communist press is telling their citizens? It is clear that Stalin gave an order to start the war. He wants to grab some land before Hitler does.”

On November 30, 1939, an official announcement appeared in the Soviet newspapers stating that the Soviet forces had to defend the Soviet borders by responding to the provocations of the “Finnish capitalist aggressors,” who started the war on behalf of unnamed “imperialist powers.” The war with Finland was fought during that winter. At some point, the Soviet press reported that the Finnish people had created their own democratic government, which was friendly to the Soviet Union, and that the Red Army was going to liberate the Finnish proletariat by the request of this new government.

Contrary to this official news, rumors were that the Finns were fighting hard and that there were many casualties among the Soviet troops, that the Red Army was unprepared to fight during the harsh winter, and that the firing squads and the commissars were forcing the men to fight. But the Soviet press reported only the victories of the Red Army, and they exaggerated numbers of losses by the Finns.

When the war continued all through the winter, the Soviet press began to print the excuses that severe climate, terrain covered with thick forest, and help from “other capitalist countries” were prolonging the war. Rumors were that the hospitals in Leningrad were filled with wounded and frostbitten

Soviet soldiers and that schools and factories were being used to treat the wounded. In the middle of March 1940, Finland signed a peace agreement with the Soviet Union, giving up a sizable part of land bordering Karelian Soviet Socialist Republic but did not concede sovereignty, as its Baltic neighbors had.

All this was discussed in our home between my father and his brother Igor, and I was warned not to talk about it to anybody. I proudly asserted that I was aware of this and that they should not worry about me. But for me this was the next step in my political convictions and in learning about the hypocrisy and lies that the Soviet government was telling its people.

All this was happening during my tenth and last year in the Ten-Years-School. Until that year I didn't consciously perceive the larger picture of what was going on in the country. I only knew that my father didn't like the Soviet government and the Communist Party and knew that I could not talk to anybody about it because it would harm him and my mother.

Then suddenly, I became aware that the whole country was controlled and manipulated by the Communist Party; that the NKVD arrested people without giving them a chance to defend themselves; that the Soviet bureaucrats were mostly members of the Communist Party, and they abused their power over ordinary people, who just wanted to be left alone to live their lives. And I knew that I didn't like this Soviet system, but there was nothing I could do about it. I knew I had to adapt myself if I wanted to live in peace. I knew that I had to keep my thoughts and beliefs secret because no one could speak against the Communist Party, against Stalin, against the Soviet government without being called "the enemy of the people" and be grabbed by the NKVD in the middle of the night and disappear without a trace.

I knew that the newspapers were printing lies about what was going on in our country and abroad. But the truth about other capitalist countries was not possible to find out. However, one could guess that it was just the opposite of what one read in the newspapers. It was like living in two worlds—one, the real one that could be seen and heard here in the Soviet Union, and the other one—the make-believe world that the Communist Party was describing in their propaganda, slogans, and articles about the "happy life" of the peasants and workers who labored for the glory of the Communist Party and the Soviet state. One could not

believe the articles in the newspapers and the radio propaganda about the exploitation of the poor workers and peasants in Germany, England, United States, and other countries with capitalist governments.

Suddenly, I became conscious of my political views. But I also knew that I should not tell anyone about it.

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1. *Komsomol*—acronym for *Kommunistichesky Soyuz Molodyezhy*—The Young Communists League.
 2. A daughter of Maria Sergeevna Litvinova, childhood friend of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky (Tonya) and her sister Tatyana (Tanya).
 3. The nickname for Maria.
 4. See the chapter “The Germans Arrive in Slavyansk.”
 5. Colleges.
 6. The nickname for Yevgyeny.
 7. Nickname for Raisa.
 8. Nickname for Valentina.
 9. From the preserved school photographs by Vovka Dobry.
 10. Nickname for Larisa.
 11. From the preserved Ten-Years-School photographs
 12. Nickname for Sofia. From the preserved Ten-Years-School photographs.
 13. Nickname for Maria
 14. Nickname for Yelena.
 15. See the chapter “Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnevich and the Yurevich Family.”
 16. From the Property Plan.
 17. See the chapter “A Fight for Our Garden” and “The Resolution of the Presidium of Stalino’s Provincial Executive Committee.”
 18. See the chapter “A Fight for Our Garden.”
 19. NKVD—acronym for *Narodny Commissariat Vnutrennikh Del*—Peoples Commissariat of Internal Affairs.
 20. From the photograph of military-training lesson in the school yard.



The Last Year of School

By Olga Gladky Verro

In September 1939, I began my last year of secondary school in the tenth grade. Not much had changed in our class from the years before. Syma, Kostya, Yasha, and I remained in the same pupils' brigade, and our routine of studying in the morning in Yasha's uncle's apartment continued,¹ but Kostya and I were working even harder now. We needed to have the best grades in all subjects for the applications and the entrance exams, for me in the Institute, and for Kostya in the Naval Military Academy. I had already decided that I would select the engineering field but was not sure yet in what area of specialization. My father was suggesting the field of chemistry, and my uncle Igor was advocating electrical engineering. I was more inclined toward the latter because my teacher of physics made his subject very interesting while the chemistry teacher, Comrade Malikova, who was also the director of our school, made it so boring that it didn't appeal to me. Besides, in physics my grades were always "Excellent," while in chemistry only "Good."

That year, soon after school started, I had a big disappointment because Sergey Kairov suddenly left our town without saying goodbye to anybody but Fimka Zusmanovich, to whom he gave his new address and asked him to give his address to anyone in our class who wanted to write to him. He informed Fimka that his father had been transferred to the town of Lvov in the Western Ukraine, recently annexed to the Soviet Union from Poland.² He explained that he would be staying temporarily with his aunt in Kharkov.

I took the initiative and wrote him a short letter right away asking him if he wanted to correspond with me. To my great surprise, he answered, but his answer was mailed together with the letter to Fimka to his address. Fimka announced to the whole class that Sergey was sending his greetings to everybody, and then he loudly called out to me, "Olga, I have the answer to your

letter from Sergey. Come and get it!" I was mortified by such insensitivity and indiscretion of both boys, Fimka's by announcing it to the whole class and Sergey's by sending the answer to my letter to Fimka, when I had given him my own address.

Before the winter school vacations began, we exchanged a couple of postcards with a few lines describing what we were doing and ending it with simple greetings. He usually was late in answering my letters, but I was happy, because after I asked him to send the answers to my home address, which he did, I had more communication with him than before in person, when he was in my class.

That year Kostya Syrota and I decided to write the story of our class. We divided our work so each of us would write chapters about the pupils and events we were most familiar with, and then we would read each other's writing and make suggestions or additions and return it for further editing.



Students in the Tenth Grade classroom of the Ten-Years School No. 15.
From the left: Ruva Litvinov; Yasha Voronov; Yasha Pevsner; Kostya Syrota; Kogan. On the left wall: Class News wall paper; on the back wall: Political News clipboard. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, Second Semester, 1939–1940. Photo by Vladimir Dobry.



Students are getting ready to march out of the 10th-year classroom for Physical Education lesson in the Ten-Years School No. 15. From the left, the girls: Sonya Tretyakova, Olga Krasnaya (holding two fingers over teacher's head), Musya Davidenko, Valya Lysykhina, Raya Kirichenko, Lora Krylova, Raya Gunicheva. On the right, the boys: Vadym Doychev, Fima Zusmanovich, Kostya Syrota, and other boys. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1939–1940. Photo by Vladimir Dobry.



Physical Education Lesson. 10th-year pupils in the courtyard of Slavyansk Ten-Years School No. 15. From the left: Olga Gladkaya (Gladky), Raya Kirichenko, Musya Davidenko, Sonya Tretyakova, Valentina Lysykhina. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, Fall 1939. Photo by Vladimir Dobry.



Physical Education Lesson 10th-year pupils in the courtyard of Slavyansk Ten-Years School No. 15. Boys of the 10th year class. From the left: Vadym Doychev, Kohan, Fima Zusmanovich, Ruva Litvinov, ..., Kostya Syrota, and other boys. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, 1939–1940. Photo by Vladimir Dobry.



Military Training of the 10th-Year class pupils in the courtyard of Slavyansk Ten-Years School No. 15. On the left: Instructor of Military Training. From the right: Raya Gunicheva, Olga Gladkaya (Gladky), Lena Tarasenko, Lora Krylova, Raya Kirichenko, Maria (Musya) Davidenko, Sonya Tretyakova, Ala Sobchenko, Valentina Lysykhina. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Fall 1939. Photo by Vladimir Dobry.

Since both of us were sitting on the last desks in opposite corners of the classroom and no one was sitting at the last desk in the middle row, we would pass our writing to each other during the lessons by placing it on the empty seat of the middle desk, and

the other would take it, read it, and pass it back. We were careful that the teacher should not see us, but it did not go unnoticed by the pupils sitting in the back of the classroom, especially Fimka Zusmanovich and Vovka Dobry, who were bursting with curiosity to know what Kostya and I were doing.

All the news about the war with Finland and the possibility that it could indeed become a bigger conflict was on our minds³ when Kostya and I were planning the chapters. We specially wanted to include what would happen to some of our pupils if the war started. We agreed on an imaginary scenario that would involve Olga Krasnaya and the girls from her clique, who would become the traitors, because we could not think of anyone else in our class who would do such a thing.

My infatuation with Sergey had become even more intense now that I was corresponding with him, and I decided that it was possible for me to see him. I asked my parents to allow me during the winter vacation to visit my Aunt Nyusya,⁴ who lived in the city of Kharkov. My mother was strongly against allowing me to travel alone at my age. But my father convinced her that I would be seventeen years old in January, and that in the summer I would have to travel somewhere alone to take the entrance examinations for the Institute; he thought this trip would be good practice for me.

I reasoned with my mother that I had been with her in Kharkov before and knew the center of the city and the neighborhood where my aunt lived. At the end, my father and I prevailed. My mother explained in a letter to my aunt that, during the summer I would not have time to enjoy the vacation, because I would have to prepare myself for the entrance examinations for the Institute. She said my visit to Kharkov was their present for my good grades and in anticipation of my successful graduation from the Ten-Years-School.

During the winter vacation, I arrived without incident in Kharkov. My Uncle Petya⁵ met me at the rail station and accompanied me to my Aunt Nyusya, who had shared an apartment with one couple for many years. She lived in one small room and shared the kitchen and the bathroom with them.

I notified Sergey in advance that during the winter school vacation I would be in Kharkov and told him that I would like to visit him. Since my aunt was working and my uncle was

attending the Architectural Technicum during the day, I took the streetcar to the center of the city and visited the *Lux* store to admire the merchandise—as in an exotic museum—not available in the stores of our provincial town. And everything was sold at such exuberant prices that I was wondering, *Who can afford to buy these things?*

On the second day after my arrival, I told my aunt that I would visit one of the pupils from my class who had moved to Kharkov. I went to visit Sergey in the morning and arrived there sometime after nine o'clock. A corpulent woman who told me that she was Sergey's aunt greeted me. To my surprise he was still asleep, and she had to wake him up. While I was waiting, she complained to me about the high price of food in the big city and asked me lots of questions about how much some of the groceries and other food and vegetables cost in our provincial town. I told her that I really didn't know much about the prices because most of the vegetables and fruits we cultivated ourselves in our garden, and it was my mother who purchased all other food.

I noted that his aunt lived in a big apartment located in one wing of an old but beautiful building that probably had formerly belonged to some rich family. They didn't share it with anyone else, a luxury that was affordable only for high-ranking Soviet bureaucrats or party bosses. The apartment was well furnished, and, obviously, Sergey had his own room. Finally, Sergey came out somewhat embarrassed that he had slept so late, but he found a good excuse—after all, it was a school vacation.

I noticed that he was dressed in more casual clothing than he had worn at our school. His aunt prepared him breakfast and offered me a cup of tea. At the table Sergey asked me about some pupils in our class, and then he suggested accompanying me to the Palace of the Pioneers,⁶ where the city children could attend many clubs and participate in other activities. It really didn't make any difference to me where we went, as long as I could be with him for a few hours. But I politely said that it sounded very interesting because in our small town there was no such place for youth.

The Palace of the Pioneers was located in a big building, and the interior was similar to the school, with many rooms with names on the doors such as "Music," "Gymnastics," "Chess," "Art," and others naming the activities or various clubs. Sergey

led me through the halls, opening the doors and letting me see what was going inside. Most of the rooms were empty, and he explained that it was because during the winter vacation not all the clubs were open. He showed me most of the building, including an assembly hall with a big stage as in the real theater.

Since I didn't know how to return to my aunt's apartment from that part of the city, Sergey accompanied me there in the streetcar. As we were traveling, he told me the names of some buildings that we were passing by. I asked him something about his school in the city. He proudly said that it was definitely better than the one in Slavyansk and that his teachers were excellent, especially in the subjects that he was interested in, literature and history. I expected that maybe he would invite me again to show me some other places, like some museum, but he didn't volunteer. I decided to tell him that I would not be sitting idle the whole week, but that I would have a very good and interesting time without him, and I bragged that my uncle had promised to take me to the museum, to the opera, and to the theater. Sergey replied something like this, "Good for you. You are lucky to have such a good uncle."

When we arrived at my streetcar stop, I invited him to come up to the room by telling him that I had brought a small gift for him, which I'd forgotten to bring to his home. To enter the apartment, I had to knock at the door and wait until the woman living in the other room would let us in. She was very surprised to see that I had returned with a boy, but she didn't make any comments.

In my aunt's room I asked Sergey to sit down, but he declined, telling me that he was already late for lunch. I took from my luggage a small brass lapel-pin shaped like a lyre, a symbol of lyrical poetry. Then I walked toward him and slowly began to unbutton his overcoat. I felt his face close to mine but didn't look at his face until I was ready to insert the pin in his suit's jacket lapel. Then I looked straight in his eyes and said solemnly, "I hope that this lyre will inspire you to write beautiful poetry!"

I saw that Sergey was embarrassed from being so close to me, as he took a step back and said, "Thank you! Thank you very much for your thought. But now I have to go. Say 'hello' to Fima and to the pupils in your class." And he extended his hand for a handshake.

As I held his hand, I said, "I enjoyed visiting with you. Thank you for showing me the Palace of the Pioneers."

He quickly exited the room and, as we were already in the entrance hall, he said, "Goodbye."

"I hope to see you soon," I answered. I was happy, and my imagination was flying ahead to the next time I would see him again.

My Uncle Pyetya accompanied me every evening to the theater, and, on some evenings, my aunt also came with us. We saw the operas "Carmen," "Yevgeny Onyegin," "Queen of Spades," the ballet "Swan Lake," and the play "Anna Karenina." Petya, as a student, could not afford such expense, and my aunt paid for all the tickets. She told me that this was her present for my graduation.

I was also fascinated when my aunt showed me all her fine outfits that she could afford to buy in the *Lux* store in the city. She had good taste and bought very elegant and good quality clothing. I admired all her fashions but especially liked the fur jacket made of white squirrel. My aunt promised that she would give it to me after I graduated from the Institute.

It was a memorable trip for me, and I was full of enthusiasm about the life in the big city, where there is so much cultural entertainment that was completely lacking in our provincial town. I made a decision to apply to the Institute in some large city, where I would have a chance to attend the best school and enjoy a stimulating cultural environment.

When I returned home, I wrote a long letter to Sergey right away, describing to him all I had seen at the opera and the theater in Kharkov and emphasized how I enjoyed visiting him. To my surprise, he answered this time very quickly, but the biggest disappointment was that he mailed again his answer to me together with his letter to Fimka, who, of course, read it before giving it to me. Fimka knew that I had seen Sergey in Kharkov because I had conveyed to him and to the class his greetings. But he was puzzled with all those enigmatic names that Sergey was mentioning in his letter. It was good that he asked me about them on the next day, because I had time to check those names in the encyclopedia and made a list of who they were.

"Well," I told Fimka, "since you have read his letter that was meant for me, I shall try to do my best to explain it to you. When I

visited Sergey, I asked him what or who inspired him to write poetry, and this is his explanation. He is telling me that as a poet he has given his heart to many beautiful Muses and could not love anyone else."

Then I took my notes and read to him, "In Greek mythology Muses were mythical spirits inspiring poets. Their names are: Thalia—the Muse of pastoral poetry; Polyhymnia—the Muse of sacred poetry; Calliope—the Muse of eloquence and epic poetry; Erato—the Muse of lyric and love poetry; and Euterpe—the Muse of music and lyric poetry."

I stopped abruptly, looked at Fimka with an air of superiority, and added, "I hope that your curiosity is satisfied."

"Ah," replied Fimka, "I thought that he was telling you about the many girls that he was in love with."

"Indeed," I replied confusing him even more, "they are very famous girls—they are the mythical Greek goddesses."

Fimka was disappointed, because he was ready to hurt my feelings by implying that Sergey was telling me that he was not in love with me. Fimka could never forgive me for hurting his pride when I wrote him a short verse that ended like this:

"Sometime in the past,
I imagined I was in love with you.
Now, only to think about
It makes me laugh. But...
It was such a long time ago..."

However, I knew that his guessing about Sergey's writings was right. It was an answer from Sergey to my infatuation with him. He was telling me that there was no room in his heart for love for me. Now it was clear that my love for him was unreciprocated, but I couldn't let it go and kept on writing him, as long as he answered me. And I continued to dream and hope.

That year we had many entertainments organized in our school. First, we had a talent show in which the students presented some of their best achievements—some played piano; the others recited poetry; a group of students sang popular songs, with Raya Gunicheva as the soloist; some danced folk dances; some performed gymnastics; the two ballerinas, Galochka Chernyavskaya and another girl, all dressed in a tutu made of white tulle, performed a ballet piece. The students from drama club presented a play in which Kostya Syrota played the role of

Balthazar Baltazarovich in Alexandr N. Ostrovsky's play, "The Marriage of Balzaminov," and Musya Davidenko played the bride.

There was also another change in the extracurricular activities in our school. After winter vacation, floor dances were held in the evenings before the days off. Until that year only folk dances and ballet were considered as Soviet-approved art to be allowed in the schools. Modern floor dancing, and even the classical waltz, were considered decadent bourgeois pastimes. One of the pupils volunteered to play piano. The pupils could come and dance if they already knew how. There was no instructor to teach dancing to those who were novices; they were left to learn from each other.

It was an awkward situation for many who didn't dare ask someone to teach them, and they stood or sat on the chairs placed along the walls of the hall. Among them were Syma, Kostya, and me. Yasha was too shy—he didn't attend them.

Kostya said to me, "Olya, let's try it."

"Kostya, I don't know how to dance," I answered. "Do you?"

"No," he replied frankly.

"Well," I suggested, "you'd better look for some of those girls who are dancing now and on the next round ask one of them to teach you. Believe me—no girl would refuse a boy as handsome as you are."

So he did just that. I remember that some other boy asked me to dance and I thought, *Maybe he knows how*, and accepted. But it didn't work because he also didn't know what he was doing.

On our way home I asked Kostya to accompany me inside our courtyard because it was a very dark night without the moon, and I told him the truth—that I was plain scared. He didn't laugh or joke about my fear and escorted me right to the door. As we entered our gate, the faithful watchdog Sharik ran to encounter us without disturbing the silence of the night with his barking. He silently stroked his long fur against our legs and accompanied us on the long pathway. Kostya said, "Smart dog, Sharik—you recognize our footsteps even in the dark."

Toward the end of the school year, most of the pupils who planned to continue their education had already decided on a couple of institutes of higher education that they preferred to attend, and they were beginning to send in their applications. My

friend Kostya made his decision a long time before anyone else had even begun to think about it and sent his application to the Naval Military Academy in the city of Leningrad. He had already received a letter with the date to present himself there for the entrance examinations, which were right after the final exams in our Ten-Years-School.

Although my father was still trying to convince me to select some area in the chemistry field, I was not enthusiastic at all about studying it further. Instead, I liked physics and mathematics and wanted to select some area where I would continue to study in these subjects in which I was very good. I consulted with my teacher of physics, Yudin, and also with my Uncle Igor, who was an electrical technician. They both suggested the field of electrical engineering and made me become enthusiastic about it by describing some of the challenges and many choices in the type of work I could select, as well as the abundant availability of employment in any city, town, or region of the country. And I decided on that field.

My teacher of physics suggested the best and the most prestigious institute of electrical engineering in the country and, without hesitation, I applied for admission to the MEI, Moscow Power Institute⁹, in the Department of Electrical Engineering.

Neither Syma nor Yasha had decided yet what they would do. Although Syma wanted to follow in the footsteps of her two sisters, one who was already a doctor, and the other who was studying in the Medical Institute, Syma was not sure if she could pass the entrance examinations at any institute. Yasha was as usual undecided and was still afraid he couldn't even pass the final exams to graduate from the Ten-Years-School. But Kostya and I were sure that, with our help, he could do it. The other students from our class were planning to attend various institutes, some decided to attend technical schools, and others were just looking for employment.



Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky) near the Lilac bush in the courtyard of their house. At 86 Young Communars Street, Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, Spring 1940. Photo by Orest M. Gladky.



Maria (Musya) Davidenko. Photo given to Olga (Lyalya) Gladkaya (Gladky) at the end of the last year in the Ten-Years School No 15. The inscription at the back states "Olyana! Remember the one with whom by a lucky chance you became a friend. Mukha." Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, May 24, 1940.

It was shortly before the end of the school year that the friendship between Musya Davidenko and me suddenly blossomed. For some time we had liked each other because neither of us had the habit of gossiping and felt that we could trust one another. Musya was going through a difficult period, trying to detach herself from her perfectionist cousin, Lena Tarasenko. She found in me a good listener and a trusted friend with whom she could share her feelings. For some reason Lena wasn't threatened by Musya's friendly relationship with me, as, for example she was hostile to Musya's attempts to become friends with Raya Kyrychenko, who was the secretary of our class *Komsomol* cell.

Musya and I had much in common in preparing ourselves for the entrance exams in institutes, and we consulted with each other about what we had to do in order to be on time to mail our applications. We went together to get our photographs for passports and exchanged extra copies with each other on May 24, 1940.¹⁰ Two days later we went to the regional office of the NKVD with our birth certificates¹¹ to receive our first passport¹² which was required if we had to move to another city and had to register there for the residency.

Musya applied to the Kharkovsky Medical Institute, and we promised to keep in touch with each other. Her cousin Lyena applied to the Aeronautical Institute in Moscow, because, as she explained, she was determined to meet and marry a pilot. Her parents decided to move to Moscow to have their daughter live with them.

Kostya and I were working hard, studying intensively, because it was important to have high grades to apply to the prestigious institutions. We found out that tutoring Syma and Yasha was very helpful to us in mastering the subject matter ourselves.

When I received the letter from the Moscow Power Institute that I had been accepted for the competitive entrance examinations, it stated that there were eight applicants to one available place and that the exams were scheduled for the month of August. The subjects for the examinations were: written and oral—in mathematics and Russian language; oral—in physics, chemistry, and German.

Although I was sure about my knowledge in these subjects, I was not sure how much was required to pass the entrance examinations with such stiff competition—I was afraid even to think about it. I began frantically preparing myself in these subjects and was quickly completely exhausted.

Being a teacher, my mother found out that if a pupil had a medical reason, he could be excused from the final exams in the Ten-Years-School and could select to take the final exams later in the summer, or agree to have on a diploma the average grades in each subject for all four years of study.

With my father we calculated my average grades from seventh to the tenth grade. In arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, physics, Russian and Ukrainian literature, history, Constitution of

the USSR, and military science, my average grades were "Excellent"; in Russian, Ukrainian, and German languages, geography, chemistry, geology, and mineralogy, astronomy, and drafting, they were "Good." My father suggested that it was as good as I would get, even if I took the final exams. Therefore, it was a family decision that my mother should bring me to the doctor and ask for a written excuse from school, because I was exhausted and needed to have some rest before I departed for the entrance exams in Moscow.

Right before the final exams were to start, we went to the doctor, who agreed that this was best for me and gave me a written statement excusing me from school. Because I needed to send my diploma to the Institute right away, I elected not to take the final exams later that summer and to have my Four-Years-average grades on my Ten-Years-School Diploma, as was the regulation at that time.¹³

Having a medical excuse from attending school during the exams, I stayed home and studied for the entrance examinations to the Institute. During that time, I saw only Yasha and Syma, who came to see me often, but Kostya, who lived very far from us, came only once, after school, to find out how I felt. He said that he was preparing for the final exams intensively, and he felt that he had done very well on those that he had taken so far.

Being on medical leave, I couldn't go to school and, regrettably, didn't see anyone else from my class to say goodbye to after the exams had finished. I didn't see Kostya, who had departed for Leningrad immediately after the last exam. Yasha and Syma had successfully passed all examinations and received the Ten-Years-School Diploma. It made me feel proud of having helped them during the year.

Yasha came to say goodbye to me before he left to stay with his mother for the summer. Syma and Musya remained at home, and we saw each other couple of times before I departed for Moscow.

My mother was worrying that I didn't have any decent coats for the fall and winter to take with me. If we could find the fabrics, my grandfather could sew them for me, but in our town there was only one cooperative, and its shelves were empty. Then one day early in the morning, when my mother was going to the market and was crossing the Church Square, she saw that there

was a long line of people standing along the sidewalk by the entrance door of the Tailoring Cooperative Shop. She asked someone what they were waiting for. They told her that there was a rumor that any day the cooperative could receive fabrics to use in their tailor shop.

My mother promptly returned home with the news and ordered me to come quickly with her to take a place in line. At the end of the line someone numbered our hands with an indelible ink pencil, and we were told by the old-timers that if we didn't want to forfeit our turn, we should be prepared to stay in line for several days and nights. During the day the *militsionyery*, the militiamen who were responsible for civilian order in town, didn't bother the people who were standing in line. It was a normal, everyday event to see people in line at any shop, except the Universal Store, where everything was sold at elevated prices. The first day my mother and I were switching standing in line, while the other was going home to rest. That day the fabrics didn't arrive. Word of mouth passed to all people standing in line that if they didn't want to lose their place, they should not abandon the line but remain standing all through the night.

That first night my mother and I stayed together until about eleven and observed that all the people seemed to be decent, of a nonsuspicious type, and she felt that I could stay with them until morning, when she would return and I would go home to rest.

At night I found out that the *militsionyery* didn't allow anyone to stay in line on the sidewalk, and that it was a common practice for the people standing in line to move from the sidewalk to the nearby movie theater that was located in the building of the former church standing in the middle of the Church Square, now named Lenin Square. We were told by the old-timers to remember the faces and the names of several people who were ahead of us and behind us, to maintain some kind of order by forming several large groups, and once in a while to check if everybody was there. If anyone had disappeared for some time, they would lose their place.

Because the movie theater was open, the *militsionyery* were not bothering anyone who was standing there. But after midnight when the theater had closed its doors, word of mouth brought us the suggestion that now we should divide into several smaller groups of about ten persons each, and that each group should

stand at some distance from the next one, position itself somewhere around the church building, and only occasionally check with the other groups to see if everyone was there.

The *militsiynyery* were coming about every hour or so, and they were ordering each group to go home. We learned the answer to promise them convincingly, "Yes, comrade, we shall go home soon." And then the group would change their place, moving around the former church building and staying faithfully with the people who were before and after them in line.

Although it was summer, toward the morning, the temperature fell, and I felt cold and tired standing for so many long hours on my feet. My mother came very early in the morning and sent me home to sleep. I came back after lunch and stayed in line until supper, but no fabrics arrived that day, either. Again my mother stayed the second evening until midnight and I gave her a break until the next morning. That third morning someone brought the news that maybe today the fabrics would arrive in the Cooperative Tailor Shop, and my mother told me to eat breakfast, to rest for just a while, and to return in time for the opening of the Shop, although we were in line quite far from the door.

Indeed, the fabrics arrived, and the salesperson was admitting a few people at a time into the shop. Only in the afternoon came our turn, and we entered the shop. There was not a large selection of fabrics, and they were all thin, the kind that were appropriate for spring and autumn coats. My mother asked if they had any heavier fabrics because we needed a winter coat. The salesperson answered almost sarcastically, "It is summer, and we are now sewing only coats for the fall. The fabrics for winter coats will arrive sometime in September. Do you want any of these fabrics or not?" And without waiting for our answer, he busied himself with the next customer.

My mother and I consulted with each other and decided that I needed the coats; and we selected for the autumn coat one wool flannel fabric in light gray with narrow black stripes. Then we decided to order another coat in a couple of sizes bigger and then to ask my grandfather to add quilted lining to make it warm for the winter. For this one we selected a fabric of beige wool Cheviot, tightly woven in a twill weave that would protect well from the winter wind.

There were only a few styles that we could choose, because

those were the patterns that had arrived in the shop with the fabrics for the autumn coats. The tailor took my measurements and was wondering why we wanted to have one coat made two sizes bigger. My mother patiently explained that I needed a winter coat and that my grandfather would add the quilted lining later.

The coats were made to the standard sizes, and the fit was not perfect; the workmanship was also not of the quality we were used to in my grandfather's work. But my mother decided not to fuss about it, saying to me, "Grandfather will correct it all!" Indeed, my grandfather fitted the coats well, made all the needed alterations, and, from one of them, he made a nice winter coat that I wore for many years. I could never forget those three days and nights that my mother and I had to stand in line to have those coats.

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1. See the chapter "True Friendship and First Love."
 2. A territory of the eastern part of Poland that was occupied and annexed in 1939 by the Soviet Union. See the chapter "Becoming Conscious of My Political Views."
 3. See the chapter "Becoming Conscious of My Political Views."
 4. Anna Gavriyllovna Berezhnaya, the younger sister of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky.
 5. Pyetr Gavriylovich Berezhnoy, the youngest brother of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky.
 6. The communist organization for school-age children.
 7. Diminutive of name Galina. The younger sister of Olga Chernyavskaya. Also, see the chapter "Germans—Invaders or Liberators."
 8. Play by Alexandr N. Ostrovsky, "The Marriage of Balzaminov." Also, see the photograph of Kostya in the role of Balzaminov in the chapter "True Friendship and First Love."
 9. MEI—acronym for *Moscowsky Energetichesky Institute*.
 10. From the preserved photograph of Musya Davidenko.
 11. From the original birth certificate.
 12. From the original first Soviet passport.
 13. From a copy of Ten-Years-School Diploma.



Moscow Power Institute

By Olga Gladky Verro

On July 30, 1940, I was departing to Moscow for my entrance examinations at the prestigious Moscow Power Institute.¹ Late in the afternoon my parents and I took Vyетка, the local branch train, to the Slavyansk Station. There I had to board the express train arriving from the Caucasus² and going north to Moscow and further to Leningrad.

My parents and I had great hopes that I would successfully pass the competitive³ entrance examinations and would be accepted as a first-year student at the Institute. In this case we decided that after the examinations I should remain in Moscow for the first semester and return home only for the winter vacation at the end of January. This implied that I had to take with me the needed clothing for three seasons—summer, fall, and winter. I also had to take bed linen, blanket, pillow, quilt and towels. Although I was taking only the minimum necessary, these items filled a large suitcase and a big bundle. Moreover, I needed the textbooks for a review before the exams. I placed them in a large market bag and filled it to capacity with toiletries and food for the trip; on top of it I placed my handbag with my documents and money.

As we were waiting on the platform for the express train to arrive, my mother was very agitated and repeated endlessly all the precautions that I, as a young girl, should be aware of when traveling alone, or while living in a big city. Before boarding the train I embraced and kissed my anxious mother, promising and reassuring her that I would be careful and judicious in everything she had advised me about and that she shouldn't be concerned about me.

My father brought my luggage inside the hard-seated car, the only one for which tickets were available on our rail station; the sleeping cars were all filled by passengers returning to Moscow and Leningrad from vacations at Caucasus. My father carefully

selected a compartment where I could sit in the corner near the window. He also chose to place me where most of the passengers were women of a non-suspicious appearance.

After placing my luggage on the high luggage shelf, he stayed with me for a while giving me last-minute practical suggestions on how I should handle the money. Then he whispered to me, "If the two hundred rubles that I gave you is not enough for your living expenses and school supplies, let me know, and I will send you some more." When we heard the whistle announcing the departure of the train, my father embraced me tightly, gave me a quick kiss on my cheek, and left in a hurry.

It was a long trip of more than one thousand kilometers from Slavyansk, and it took about twenty-four hours to arrive at my destination. In the big stations, such as Kharkov,⁴ Kursk,⁵ and Orel,⁶ the train waited endlessly either for the locomotive to be serviced or changed, or for the arrival of trains on the connecting rail lines to pick up the passengers who needed to transfer to the express train going North.

At the station in Kursk, the train waited a long time, and many beggars came through the car. After giving to the first beggars, the passengers didn't respond anymore to the pleas of those who came later. But I, as well as the passengers in my compartment, were very impressed with one frail old man who, extending his trembling, bony hand, pled in a feeble voice, "Kind people, I beg you only for a piece of bread... Please, could you give me a piece of bread... You are traveling from Ukraine—you should have some bread."

One passenger offered him some coins, but the old man refused the money, explaining, "This year we had a very poor harvest in our region. The peasants had to give their established quota of grain to the government. There was nothing left for us." Several passengers, including me, were very moved by the plea of the old peasant, and, one by one, we opened our bags and shared some food with him and were also generous with the other beggars who came after.

I thought it was ironic that, after almost thirty years of a socialist economy, the peasants who toiled to feed the rest of the country were reduced to begging for a piece of bread to feed themselves. This episode influenced me deeply and reinforced in my mind the already germinating seeds sown by my father's

strong aversion to the Soviet government and to the ruling Communist Party.

The next day late in the afternoon, I arrived at the big railroad station in Moscow. I was holding the detailed directions mailed to me from the Institute and carefully followed them on what number streetcars I had to take and which stop to get off at. It stated that from the streetcar stop I had to walk to Krasnokazarmennaya Street, No. 17 to the offices of the Power Institute that would be kept open all day and night to receive the arriving applicants.

When I got out of the streetcar, there were several people on the platform waiting for their streetcars to arrive. I asked one middle-aged woman for directions to the Power Institute, but she replied that she didn't know. One presentable man who overheard us approached me and very politely offered his advice. "It is already late; the Institute's office is already closed. You should go there tomorrow morning. If you come with me, I shall help you to find a place to stay overnight."

The woman whom I had asked for directions looked with suspicion at the man and shook her head. I understood her thoughts and told the man as politely as he offered, "The Institute's directions state that today their office shall be open twenty-four hours and that the office shouldn't be too far from this streetcar stop. Could you, please, indicate the direction in which I should walk over there?"

The man obviously didn't like my answer, because he suddenly changed his polite manners and answered quite rudely, "Go across the street and ask someone over there!"

"Thank you," I replied and took in one hand my large suitcase and in the other both the big bundle and the bag, and slowly walked to the other side of the street. There I found a *militционер* who gave me the directions.

Indeed, the office was just around the corner on the next street, and it was open. There were already several young girls and boys waiting. The employee checked my papers and assigned me to a dormitory room. She told me to wait with the others until our guide to the dormitory arrived and to come for the formal registration tomorrow morning to that office. It was already dark when the guide accompanied all of us on the streetcar to the Institute's dormitory complex located at Number 7, Lefortovskiy

Val.

I was assigned to room number 58 on the second floor of building 12, which faced the street. When I entered, the girls greeted me in a friendly manner.

"I am Rita..."

"I am Valentina Zakharova, but I like to be called Valya."

"I am Olga Gladkaya,⁸ and you may call me Olya," I replied.

The girls were sitting on beds that were placed on the two sides of the big window. The beds were already made, covered with blankets, and had pillows propped up against the wall. Near the door was another bed with just a mattress on it. I placed the bundle with my bedding on top of it and began to unpack. In the room, there were three chairs and two small tables; one table was under the window between the two beds, and another was opposite my bed. Near the door was a small wooden wardrobe. A narrow passageway led from the door to the window, and high on the ceiling was a plain light bulb.

Valya told me that they had just returned from a cafeteria that was located in the dormitory complex next to our building. She advised me that if I wanted to eat something, it would be open for about an hour longer.

"Do they have any tea or milk?" I asked. "I ate only dry food while waiting in the Institute's office."

"Yes, they have them," replied Valya.

I placed my suitcase under the bed and went downstairs.

I was not very impressed with the students' cafeteria because it was already late in the evening, and there was only leftover food. I had a glass of milk with a small white bun and quickly returned to my room.

The girls told me that they had already found out that there was a bathroom with several stalls and sinks and a shower room to be used by all the girls living on our floor. They said there was also one small communal kitchen that we could use if we wanted to cook something; we could purchase food from the grocery cooperative that was located close to the dormitory complex. On the ground floor there was a large study hall with tables, chairs, and drafting boards that all students in that building could use.

That evening all three of us were in a good mood, and we got acquainted with each other. We had two things in common—we all were from small towns, and it was the first time that we had

been away from home on our own.

One of my roommates, Rita,⁹ was tall, well built, and had a large but attractive face with slightly prominent cheekbones and dark-brown eyes accentuated by wide brown eyebrows. Her long, dark-brown hair was parted on one side and was collected low in the back from ear to ear in a soft roll. She was from a small town located somewhere near the Ural Mountains. Rita was applying to the Power Station Construction Department.

The other roommate, Valentina,¹⁰ was a little bit shorter than I. She had an open, fair-skinned face with well-proportioned but minute features and pensive gray eyes. She casually combed back her short, dark-blond hair, curled slightly at the ends. She was from the small town of Zaraysk in the Moscow Region. Like me, she was applying to the Electrical Engineering Department.

On the first day, we found out that in the morning there was a big crowd in the bathrooms and that, if we didn't want to wait long, we should get up earlier in the morning to be among the first to get to the sinks. The first day, the three of us did everything together, and it was easier for us to find our way around the big city. We took the streetcar and went to the Institute's offices to register and receive the schedules for the examinations. There we were told to go to the Moscow 39th *Militsia* Precinct to register for a temporary residency. We were surprised that on our passports they registered us only from the first to the twenty-fifth of August 1940, which was the date when our entrance examinations would end.¹¹ Valentina commented, "Girls, if we don't pass the entrance examinations, they don't want us to remain in Moscow!"

Since Valentina and I were applying to the Electrical Engineering Department, we had the same schedule for all entrance examinations. Rita, being in another department, had a different schedule from us. It became natural for Valentina and me to do many things together, to walk to the streetcar stop, to sit in the examination room, to return to the dormitory, and to go and eat in the cafeteria. Rita found herself a male companion right away and could do well without us.

The exams were scheduled with several free days between them, giving us enough time to review the textbooks that we'd brought from home. After taking the oral exams in physics, chemistry, Russian, and German, our grades were written on our

Examination Sheets¹² right away, and we could see our progress immediately. But the problems and questions on the written exams in mathematics varied among students. When we were returning to the dormitory, Valentina and I checked with each other on how we had solved our problems. It gave us peace of mind when the other considered our answers as being correct. This made Valentina and me drawn intellectually to each other right away.

When our examination sheets were posted with the grades of the written exams, we became ecstatic. We both received a grade of “Excellent” in mathematics and already had “Excellent” in oral physics. These two subjects were considered the most important for the engineering field. In written and oral Russian, and in oral German and chemistry, I received grades of “Good.” Valentina also received “Good” and “Excellent” grades in those three subjects. On the same day Valentina, Rita, and I received acceptance certificates to the Moscow Power Institute as first-year students for the 1940-1941 school year. This certificate was exchanged for the Student’s Card,¹³ valid from August 29, 1940 to February 11, 1941—from the beginning of the first semester to the beginning of the second semester.

Valentina, Rita, and I went to the post office right away to send telegrams to our parents. My message was short and concise in announcing the good news: “Passed examinations. Accepted at the Institute. Kiss you. Lyalya.” At the post office I encountered Fimka Zusmanovich,¹⁴ my schoolmate from Slavyansk. We had not known that both of us had applied to the Power Institute, and we hadn’t seen each other during the entrance exams. He was also sending a telegram to his parents notifying them that he had been accepted at the Institute to the Power Stations Construction Department. Just in case we might need to contact each other, we exchanged the numbers of our buildings and rooms.

With the student’s card we immediately went to the Moscow 39th *Militsia* Precinct for students’ residency registration. They dated our passports¹⁵ August 31, 1940, and as residing on Number 7, Lefortovsky Val, Building Number 12, Rm. 58.

Valentina, Rita, and I celebrated the occasion by buying transfer tickets for the Metro¹⁶ that allowed us to change anywhere from one line to another without restrictions. We exited at each station and admired the beautiful marble walls that were

decorated with bas-reliefs of Soviet art depicting the socialist-style idealized scenes of the happy life of workers in the factories and peasants harvesting the fields. We also enjoyed the luxury of a smooth, pleasant ride in the modern Metro cars. For us, girls from small towns, it was an unusual spectacle and a thrilling experience, and we returned to the dormitory excited about the marvels of art and technology.

All first-year students in the Institute had the same schedule of lectures in physics and mathematics. In the Electrical Engineering Department, Valentina and I were assigned to the same laboratories and practical-exercises classes.

The Power Institute facilities were in three different locations. Several buildings were at the same location as the main offices of the Institute. In one of them was the main lecture hall. There the famous Professor Levin was giving his lectures in mathematics to all students enrolled in all departments of the same year of study. In the other buildings were the classrooms where all practical-exercises classes were held.

The physics lecture hall and laboratory were located in another part of the city; to get there we had to take the streetcar, transfer to the Metro, and from there walk to an old building that had a lecture hall shaped in the form of an amphitheater. There lectures were held for all students enrolled in all departments of the same year of study. The chemistry lecture hall and laboratory, as well as the drafting laboratory, were located in the recently constructed building at the Lefortovsky Val, which was walking distance from the students' dormitory.

In addition to the different locations of facilities, in order to accommodate the increased enrollment at the Institute, students were scheduled in three shifts. All first-year students were scheduled for the third shift, which was held from five o'clock in the afternoon to ten o'clock in the evening.

Every day Valentina and I left the dormitory at about four o'clock in the afternoon, or earlier, if we had to travel to the physics lecture hall, and returned after eleven o'clock at night. In the beginning we tried to go to sleep right away after returning from the lessons, but it did not work too well. In the morning there was no reason to get up very early because the bathrooms were crowded, but after we ate our breakfast, it was already close to ten o'clock. We studied for a couple of hours, and then we had

to go to the cafeteria for lunch during the hours that it was open; after returning to the room, there was less than three hours left for studying. With all these interruptions, we were wasting a lot of time and could not accomplish all our assignments that we needed to do for that day.

We tried another alternative of doing our homework at night upon our return from the Institute and staying as long as necessary to finish most of our written assignments; then we went to sleep, sometimes as late as four o'clock in the morning. We slept almost until lunchtime, having just enough time for our morning grooming. After lunch we had plenty of time to do our reading assignments and to review some of the lessons to refresh our memory before the lectures and practical-exercises classes. This routine worked very well for me because since fifth grade, I had always been scheduled for the second shift in school and was used to staying up late at night to do my homework and help my mother correct her students' papers; then I would sleep until late in the morning. Valentina was also a night person, and we both felt very comfortable with this routine.

Right from the beginning, in our practical-exercises classes we had strong competition in mathematics and physics from some boys who were very smart in these subjects. They formed a small sub-group and associated only casually with the rest of the students, whom they more or less treated as inferiors, because they couldn't always solve all the problems. But Valentina and I were strong in those subjects, and we always had the problems solved. In addition, we were both willing to help our classmates. We came earlier to class and asking if anyone needed help with the assignment. And there were always a few boys and girls who were glad to have our help. For me it was not new helping the others; it resembled my cooperation with my good friend Kostya Syrota when we helped our friends Syma and Yasha.¹⁷

In the beginning one of the smart boys would occasionally mock Valentina and me by asking in a sarcastic tone of voice, "Girls, do you need our help in solving the problems?"

And we would answer in an innocent manner, "No, today the problems were not difficult at all."

But, as the assignments became more and more complex and we continued to solve the problems and to help others, it became clear that some of those boys didn't like to be outsmarted by two

girls. Their feelings of needing to preserve their male superiority began to show by their loud, mocking remarks, uttered in a sneering manner, "Listen, boys, today's math assignment was re-e-ally hard. Do you think that the girls had good luck again that helped them solve the problems?" Satisfied with their practical joke, they would look in our direction and laugh. But those students in our class who respected us for being helpful to them in occasional coaching were not amused with these jokes and would come close to us and encourage us not to be bothered by those snobs.

Although Valentina and I were somewhat annoyed with all this nonsense, we felt that we were winning in our competition with the brainy boys. And it also reinforced our drive to succeed in our studies so we could show those opinionated boys that girls could be as smart as they were.

After a short time of working independently in solving the problems in mathematics and physics and then comparing the results, Valentina and I found out that by consulting with each other during the progress of our work, we could do it much quicker. Therefore, it soon became common for us to solve them together; putting our brains together in one effort was more efficient than doing it alone.

We discovered that studying together with combined strength and resourcefulness was also stimulating. It was especially exciting to solve the problems in mathematics when the ideas, formulas, and numbers were flowing alternatively from our lips, as the links of a continuous chain created by the mysterious connection of our thoughts. We followed a progression toward the successful resolution of the problem, overwhelmed with joy and almost intoxicated with this miracle of the fruitful union of two independent minds.

After the problem was solved, after having accomplished a very difficult task together, an extraordinary inner satisfaction enveloped us both. We were in ecstasy, like two lovers after the union of their souls. Our common motivation and drive to succeed in our studies and our great interest in the subject matter were cementing the bonds of harmonious togetherness and intellectual intimacy.

Sometimes in those moments of ecstasy, we felt so close in our feelings that we were leaving aside the subject matter and the

problem we were solving and spontaneously beginning to turn inside-out our souls, revealing our longings to find an ideal love of that special boy. We confided about our not-so-distant past infatuations with the boys in our life, our secret thoughts and uncertainties, our doubts and our hopes. Valentina knew that I was receiving postcards from Sergey Kairov¹⁸, and she told me about the boys that she had fallen in love with before. But day by day, our past feelings were becoming less and less intense and didn't lead us into the mood of love fantasies about the boys with whom we believed to be once in love. Many boys we were encountering in this large Institute were more real than those we left behind.



Olga Gladkaya at Moscow Power Institute dormitory. Lefortovsky Val, 7, Bld. 12, Rm. 58, Moscow, Soviet Union, December 30, 1940. Photo by Valentina Zakharova.



*Valentina (Valya) Alexandrovna Zakharova, Olga's best friend and roommate.
Photo made early in the morning at the Moscow Power Institute students
dormitory, Lefortovsky Val, 7, Bld. 12, Rm. 58, Moscow, Soviet Union, Fall
1940. Photo by Olga Gladkaya.*

Meanwhile, Valentina and I became friends with two boys and one girl from our practical-exercises classes. They didn't live in the students' dormitory but somewhere in the city with their families. Our friendship with them started gradually, as they sought our help with solving the most difficult problems in mathematics and some assignments in physics.



Valentina (Valya) Alexandrovna Zakharova, Olga's best friend and roommate at the Moscow Power Institute. Moscow, Soviet Union, spring 1941. The inscription on the back of the photo: "Look and remember pangs of the past, but now present. Valya."

One of our friends was Tanya—Georgian by nationality. She was an exceptionally pretty girl of typical Caucasian beauty, with long black hair, big brown eyes, and a light complexion. She was very sincere, good-natured, unpretentious, and cheerful. She lived in the central part of the city in a two-room apartment with a small kitchen and, as was common in Moscow to help with the rent, her parents were sub-renting one of the rooms to two single men.

On some festive days when there were no classes, Valentina and I visited Tanya and enjoyed her mother's cookies. Tanya accompanied and introduced Valentina and me to the famous luxury store GUM,¹⁹ which was full of merchandise not available

anywhere else; some things were common necessities, and some were luxury items. But we could only admire them because everything had such exorbitant prices that we students couldn't afford them, and most people could probably buy them only on special occasions.

The other two friends were boys. One of them was Dyma Karklin. He was quite secretive about his family—the only thing he told us was that he and his younger sister lived with their grandmother and that his national origin was Finnish. Although he was smart, he often needed our help in catching up with the assignments because he worked during the day to help his grandmother make ends meet. Dyma was well-built, with broad shoulders and average height. He had an open face, light-gray eyes, and straight blond hair that he combed smooth toward the back. He had a very pleasant personality, good manners, amiable disposition, and associated well with others. He could speak easily on any subject; however, he never engaged in any conversation good or bad about the Soviet government or the Communist Party and its leaders.

The other boy was Misha, whose last name I don't remember. He was a native of Moscow and lived with his parents. Misha was very shy and a little bit awkward in his movements, resembling a bear, which fit his name, Misha—it had the same spelling in Russian as “teddy bear.” For some reason, right from the beginning, we started to tease him that he was in love with Valentina; this embarrassed him, and his face would turn red, but he never tried to deny it.

The five of us used to sit close together in the classroom and in the lecture halls, where whoever would come first would save places for all of us by placing books or notebooks on the seats. The boys, now and then, visited us in the dormitory in the early afternoon, mostly when they needed help in mathematics, and then we traveled together to the Institute. As a group, we occasionally went out, sometimes to the movies, or to the museums. Once, following a suggestion by Valentina, we went to Red Square and stayed in a long line to the Mausoleum to see the preserved body of Lenin. Seeing the small red-haired head and yellowish-ebony face of this so-called great leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Revolution²⁰ left a very negative impression on me. But, as all my other friends, I kept my opinion

to myself.

In good weather we enjoyed walking in Gorky Park and along the Moscow River. Together, we also visited the Agricultural Exhibition. And one time the boys were able to get tickets at the Spartak Stadium, and we went to watch the *football*²¹ game. For me it was the first soccer game that I had seen.

Valentina was a member of the *Komsomol*²², and, soon after the beginning of the semester, she was appointed as the secretary of the *Komsomol* cell of our practical-exercises class. This position in the youth organization suddenly elevated her status in the eyes of the students. And those boys, who were earlier envious of her achievements in mathematics and physics, stopped their open competitive spirit toward her; since before it had been directed toward both of us, it also stopped toward me. They changed their attitude so much that, when the problems were very difficult, some of them even dared to ask if they could check the solutions with us.

As the secretary of the *Komsomol* cell, Valentina had the task of enlisting more students to become members of the organization. But she surprised me completely when she sincerely discouraged me from becoming a member by saying, “Olga, *Komsomol* is not for you. You are very independently minded and are too quick in saying what you think straightforwardly without being afraid to tell your opinion. This would get you in trouble very quickly, and you would not survive for long in the organization. To be a good member of the *Komsomol*, one needs to be able to listen, to obey, and to follow the directions from those above you who get them from the Central Committee. One should never criticize their orders.”

After hearing this advice from Valentina, I was glad that, with all our friendship and openness, I had never told her any of my political views, of my dislike of the Soviet government and the Communist Party. Probably, very unconsciously, I remembered how my mother always warned my father to be cautious even in front of me in expressing his deep hatred toward them. But my friendship with Valentina didn't change after her new political appointment, and we concentrated as before on our academic achievements and in helping our classmates with the assignments.

Besides an occasional outing with our friends, we didn't have much time for socializing, especially if it involved traveling across

the big city; studying was taking most of our time. Once I visited my friend from Slavyansk, Zoya Litvinova,²³ in her dormitory. She was in her second year of study in the Institute of Foreign Languages, where she was studying French. Zoya was two years older than I, but we knew each other well because her mother was a childhood friend of my mother and her sister Tanya; also, my father and her mother worked together in the Printing House, making our families bound by the long friendship.

Several times I visited my Slavyansk schoolmate Lena Tarasenko, a cousin of my friend Musya Davidenko. Lena lived in Moscow now with her parents, who moved there to be with their daughter who attended the Institute of Aeronautics. They lived in a small apartment in a newly built apartment complex on the other end of the city, and it took a long time for me to travel there from our students' dormitory. I had to change streetcars twice and take the Metro. When I visited her I usually stayed there overnight. We slept together in her bed and usually talked late into the night. She confided in me that she didn't have any girlfriends but that she had already dated a few older boys from her institute. She told me that her goal was to get married to a tall, handsome young man who definitely planned to be a pilot. Lena never came to visit me, and we didn't go anywhere together.

Of course, I saw occasionally my schoolmate from Slavyansk, Fimka Zusmanovich, mostly at the lectures for all first-year students in the mathematics lecture hall. We usually exchanged some news from home, or our opinions about the instructors and professors, and about the courses we were taking. Once in a while he asked me for news of Sergey Kairov, with whom he didn't correspond anymore.

Most of our professors and teachers of practical exercises classes were very good and dedicated educators. But the star of the Institute was Professor Levin, who gave lectures in mathematics. He was known to have attended the famous and prestigious Oxford University in England. Very few Soviet professors were allowed to attend universities abroad, and he certainly was an exceptional professor.

He was always dressed impeccably as an Englishman in an exquisitely tailored black suit; his tall and slender figure moved with distinction on the elevated rostrum in front of the auditorium as he wrote, with self-assured ease, mathematical

formulas one after another on the huge blackboard. And we students barely had time to copy them, while also trying to make the annotations of his explanations.

I remember that once after filling the blackboard with formulas, Professor Levin told us, “You probably wonder how I remember all these formulas. Well, this morning before coming here, I had to take out the textbook and review them. Remember, in mathematics formulas are very important for making the calculations and supporting the logic. I expect for you to learn them and that they will remain in your memory at least until your next test, and that you will definitely review them before your final exams. It is impossible to remember them for the rest of your life. The important thing is that you remember the logic on which they are based, and that you know where to find them when you need them in your practical applications in the future.”

We were also lucky to have a very capable teacher, Dmytrov, who conducted the practical-exercises class in mathematics. He was able to give life to the practical applications of the theoretical logic that Professor Levin was lecturing on.

We also had an excellent Professor Belikov, who gave lectures in physics and always presented interesting demonstrations that we could observe from our seats in the amphitheater-shaped auditorium. A very good and dedicated teacher, Mantsev, supported Belikov’s lectures in practical-exercises class in physics. He remembered that he gave me a grade of “Excellent” during the entrance examinations and always expected me to live up to a higher standard of performance in his class.

We very much enjoyed the laboratory in mechanical drafting with a capable but strict instructor, and the clear visual demonstrations by Professor Genkin. Valentina and I spent many night hours working diligently to have perfect drafting projects. Another pleasant teacher whose class we liked was Yevreinova, who taught us technical German language. But we weren’t lucky in chemistry—Professor Glasunov gave the most boring lectures, and the teacher, Sobolyev, was not capable of making our lessons connected to real life in our practical-exercises classes.

Then there was one subject named “Foundation of Marxism-Leninism” that was obligatory for all first-year students. I hated it and considered it a waste of my time to attend, while Valentina liked it and insisted that it was a very important part of our

education. Lecture and practice class were conducted by a meticulous *partiyets*, as the party members were called, a lecturer who'd been elevated to a title of "professor," and decorated with medals that he displayed on his chest pinned to some kind of military uniform. One of the medals, if I remember correctly, was for the "battle of Baku." This "professor" was not able to put together two words in correct Russian, and we called him the "complete unalphabet." During his lectures in a big lecture hall, to keep from being bored, a group of the students invented a game of taking notes of "professor's" mistakes. And then after the lecture we compared notes on who was able to catch up more mistakes.

The practice class was conducted by another communist party member, who expected students to memorize all politically important dates, including days, of the Communist and Bolshevik historical events, and the exact words and phrases of the famous speeches and doctrines of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin.

But Valentina and I were so much involved in our preferred subjects of physics and mathematics and with the time-consuming but important mechanical drafting projects that we didn't give much importance to the occasional disappointments with the chemistry, which was not our major subject. I was also trying not to be upset by the nonsense of the political communist indoctrination. On this topic Valentina and I agreed to disagree, without further discussion.

Toward the end of the first semester, the Central Commissariat of the People's Education issued new regulations completely changing the long-existing rules pertaining to the right for free education in the institutions of higher learning. The students were informed that, beginning with the second semester of the 1940–1941 school year, students had to pay tuition.

Other surprising and unwelcome news came for the needy students, who were receiving a stipend for their living expenses. According to the new regulations, anyone could earn a stipend and become exempt from paying tuition, regardless of their economic need, if, in the preceding semester, two-thirds of their grades were "Excellent," and the rest were "Good." The grade of "Satisfactory" remained as a passing grade for any course. For the practical exercises and for the laboratory, which continued for the whole school year, the grade remained to be given at the end of

the school year, or, instead of a grade, it could be evaluated as "Passed" or "Failed" with the number of hours of attendance during the semester. The textbooks continued to be free by borrowing them from the institutes' libraries.

These new regulations were not applicable to the military institutions of higher learning, where education continued to be free, and needy students could receive the stipend there. Students were encouraged to transfer to the military academies with the benefit of transferring their earned credits in the institutes and being placed in the same year of study.

These new regulations resulted in an unprecedented and open discontent among students, who loudly and bluntly voiced their negative opinions and used disparaging expressions about the Soviet government, the Communist Party, and Comrade Stalin himself. The needy students accused them of breaking the promise for free education and for treating the poor students unjustly. Especially clamorous were the students who were economically dependent on the stipend and had average grades.

The male students were convinced that this was a trick by the military establishment, which needed more officers. Students protested that because there were not enough young men enrolling in the military academies, the Soviet government was forcing them against their will to become the pawns of the military. In the halls, classrooms, laboratories, lecture halls, dormitory, and in the cafeteria, one could hear animated and unrestrained discussions only on one theme, the injustice of the Communist Party and the Soviet government toward the students.

I was surprised to hear spoken aloud such phrases as, "Damned 'Father' Stalin—he needs more military officers!"

"Where are the promises of the Soviet government to provide free higher education for the sons and daughters of the workers?!"

"Those fat Communists—they have plenty of money to pay for the education of their children! They don't care about us."

For average students it was already too late to bring up their grades to the level needed to be exempt from tuition and to receive the stipend. But Valentina and I had such good grades during the semester that all we needed now was to do as well on the semester's final exams. And those grades would qualify us for

the second semester for the benefits and privileges that the others were losing—the stipend and the free tuition.

All three of our friends decided to remain in our Institute. For Tanya and Misha, there was no problem with paying tuition since their parents could afford it. But, for Dyma Karklin, it was hard to come up with the tuition money, since he was already disqualified from receiving the stipend and he lived with his grandmother and younger sister and worked part time to help with the expenses. It was at this time that Dyma dared to disclose that, when he applied at the beginning of the year for the stipend, they refused him on the grounds that he couldn't provide proof of his parents' income, or their death certificates. But he didn't explain to us why he couldn't do it.

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1. The V. M. Molotov, Order of Lenin, Moscow Power Institute, acronym—MEI—*Moscowsky Energetichesky Institut*, (17 Krasnokazarmennaya Street, Moscow, USSR).
 2. A territory between Black Sea and the Caspian Sea that includes the Caucasus Mountain Range.
 3. That year at the MEI there were eight applicants for one available place.
 4. The city in northeastern Ukraine north of Slavyansk.
 5. The large town in southeastern Russia north of Kharkov.
 6. The large town in southeastern Russia north of Kursk.
 7. Singular form of *militisionery*.
 8. Gladkaya is the feminine spelling of the masculine last name name Gladky—in Russian, last names have a gender spelling.
 9. From the preserved photograph.
 10. From the preserved photograph.
 11. From the passport residency registration.
 12. From the institute's entrance examination sheet.
 13. From the preserved student's card.
 14. See the chapter "True Friendship and First Love."
 15. From the passport page.
 16. Moscow's subway.
 17. See the chapter "True Friendship and First Love."
 18. See the chapter "True Friendship and First Love."

19. GUM—acronym *Gosudarstvenny Universalny Magazine*—The State Universal Department Store.
20. V. I. Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Communist Party during the Russian Revolution of 1917–18; Communist Party Chairman and Premier of the Soviet Union, 1918–24.
21. Soccer (in English.)
22. Komsomol—acronym for *Kommunistichesky Soyuz Molodyezhy*—Young Communist League.
23. See the chapter “The Newspaper’s Proofreader.”



Second Semester at the Power Institute

By Olga Gladky Verro

It was at the end of the first semester that I fell in love again, this time with Dyma Karklin. My infatuation with Sergey Kairov suddenly vanished, like the morning fog. It was a long time since I had received the last postcard from him; it had as usual been short, dry, and contained only a few statements about his whereabouts. I didn't feel like writing him back, and I decided that it was time to end this nonsense. I wrote to him on a postcard a short message: "Hello from Moscow! A long time ago I received your last postcard. I am surprised that, being a poet, you write such dull, uninteresting letters. I think that it is time that we should stop our correspondence. So long! Olga."

I showed Valentina the postcard and, while she was reading it, I explained, "I should have written this to him long ago. I could never figure out why he was continuing to answer my letters since he didn't care about me at all. Although I'd never mentioned in my letters that I was in love with him, I think he knew it, and my letters were nourishing his vanity by making him feel loved and admired. I feel so good that it is I who is telling him to stop our correspondence. Somehow it makes a definite ending to this long-distance relationship that was going nowhere."

Valentina was surprised that I almost casually ended my contact with the boy with whom I was supposed to be in love. But I was not ready yet to tell her about my new feelings for Dyma.

On the evening of December 31, 1940, Valentina and I celebrated the arrival of the New Year in the dormitory study hall, where all students gathered that evening. And on the first of January, we were invited by our friend Tanya to her house and stayed there all afternoon enjoying her mother's sweets. The next week our first semester exams were starting, and we had to study hard to receive good grades.

Both Valentina and I had passed all our first semester final exams with flying colors.¹ On the oral exams the students received their questions written on the examinations sheets and were allowed some time to prepare themselves while waiting for their turn to be examined by the instructor. When we came for the exam in higher mathematics, the instructors of the practical-application classes conducted the examinations, but we were surprised that Professor Levin was at the head table. He didn't conduct the examinations himself but was listening to how the students were answering the questions. Occasionally he would ask some impromptu questions himself.

When my turn came to be examined and I answered all the questions that were on my examination sheet, Professor wrote on the sheet of paper an algebraic formula and asked me to name the shape of its graphic representation. I promptly answered, "Parabola." He wrote another one, and I answered again without hesitation, "Hyperbola."

After the third one, which I also answered as quickly as the first two, he said, "Ve-e-ry go-o-d. Tell me how you remember them so well."

I answered, "Well, when my friend and I did the assignments that were given to us from that little exercise booklet, we were so curious to find out what graphic curves would come from the other formulas, we did all the exercises in that booklet."

Professor Levin smiled and said approvingly while signing his name in my Matriculation book, "I cannot give you a lesser grade than 'Excellent.'"

I exited the examination room almost triumphant to have received such a good grade from Professor Levin himself. When I recounted this to my good friend Valentina, who was waiting for me in the hall, she said, "It was worth it to be curious and work on those exercises, as we did! Now you have established an excellent reputation with Professor Levin and with our instructor in practical exercises in mathematics. This means that they will not be as strict with you for the duration of the course."

"Maybe it will be just the opposite—maybe they will expect from me more than from someone else," I replied, doubtful of her assumption.

I also had "Excellent" in descriptive geometry and "Good" in physics, and "Passed" in all practical-exercises classes and

laboratories in physics, chemistry, mechanical drafting, German, and gymnastics, in which the grades were based on the averages received during the semester. Thanks to patient coaching by my good friend Valentina, I didn't fail the Foundation of Marxism-Leninism. Indeed, both Valentina and I qualified for the stipend and for free tuition for the second semester.

I was very frugal with the money that my father gave me and had enough left to buy not only a train ticket to go home for the winter vacation but also to buy gifts for my parents. Before departing home, I bought several kilograms of sugar and other staples that we had a shortage of in our town and had to stand in long lines for when the products did arrive in the store. In Moscow they were much easier to find.

At the end of the third week of January 1941, I arrived home for a two-week winter vacation. My father encountered me at the rail station and wondered why my luggage was so heavy. My parents were very surprised to receive my gifts because my father hadn't expected that I would be so frugal in spending the money he gave me. Of course, they were very proud of my successful half-year at the Institute. But the biggest surprise for them was that with my grades I was able to receive the stipend and didn't have to pay tuition for the second semester.

I wanted to see my friends from school right away. First of all, I went to see my girlfriend Syma Shyrman. She was home, and we had a very sentimental reunion after six months of not seeing each other. She hadn't qualified to take the entrance exams for any institute and was attending *Medical Technicum*, from which her sisters could eventually help her to transfer later to the Medical Institute without taking the entrance exams. She told me that she was dating a nice Jewish boy and was very happy with their relationship; most important, her parents liked him also. We reminisced about the good old days we had together and shared our hopes for the future.

Yasha Voronov was not at his uncle's home, as he had gone to visit his mother. But his uncle told me that he was also attending the *Technicum*. Nobody had any news from Kostya Syrota, and no one knew his address. All they knew was that he was attending the Naval Academy in Leningrad.

I was also lucky to find my friend Musya Davidenko, who had come home for winter vacation from Kharkov, where she

attended the Kharkovsky Medical Institute. We saw each other a couple of times and shared our impressions about life away from home. She confided that, after a half-year of living in a big city and among the students of the Institute, she didn't have the same admiration that she had before for her boyfriend Nikolay Dyeryuzhkin; he had remained to be the secretary of the *Komsomol* in our Ten-Years-School. Vacation passed very quickly, and I had to say goodbye to my friends and to my parents.

On February 7, 1941, I returned to Moscow and began the second semester of studies at the Power Institute. Now Valentina and I had additional incentive to earn good grades that would qualify us to receive the stipend and free tuition for the next school year, and we worked even harder than we had before. Our studies remained strictly concentrated in the subjects important for the engineering field, with lectures and practical-exercises classes in higher mathematics, physics, chemistry, German, mechanical drafting, and the theoretical mechanics. Of course, we had a required class in the Theory of Marxism-Leninism that I couldn't stand, but Valentina patiently coaxed me to study by persuading me with a very powerful incentive: "Olga, if you want to earn a stipend for next year, you must have a good grade in this subject, too!"

Then we had a compulsory physical-education class that I liked very much and which gave us a respite from the heavy concentration in the academic subjects. During the winter we had cross-country ski lessons in Gorky Park, with all the equipment provided to the students by the Institute. And toward the spring we resumed the exercises in gymnastics at the Institute's gymnasium, where this time we worked on various types of gym equipment. It was at one of those lessons when we had to jump over a padded horse that I landed badly and injured my left knee. My knee became swollen; the nurse told me to use alcohol compresses on it and gave me an excuse from attending the gym classes. My knee remained tender for a long period of time, and I was excused from gymnastics for the rest of the school year.

As a result of the new regulations about student eligibility for the stipend and tuition, many young men from the first, second, and even third year of studies had transferred to the military academies, and among them were several of our male classmates. About two-thirds of the first-year-enrollment students now were

females. But Dyma and Misha remained at our Institute, and our circle of friends didn't change. Valentina and I were helping them in mathematics and physics, as we had before, especially Dyma, who had less time to study because he now had to work more hours during the day than he did during the first semester, to cover the additional tuition expense.

Although I had been in love with Dyma Karklin for some time, I did not tell Valentina or Tanya, fearing that it would somehow change the harmony in our circle of friends, which until that time had remained untouched by sentimental attachments and was strictly a healthy friendship. One night, when Valentina and I were working late on our drafting projects and there was nobody but us in the dormitory study hall, I confessed to her that I had fallen in love with Dyma. She listened to me and commented only that he was indeed a very nice boy. "But," I complained, "he doesn't give any signs of having anything more than a friendship toward me."

Valentina said something like, "That's how it should be in our circle of friends."

Since that night, I opened my soul and talked about my hopes that one day Dyma would reciprocate my love. On some nights I complained about my suffering to Valya. She mostly listened, and sometimes sympathized and supported me with a few words, but she mostly listened in silence.

One night, when our roommate Rita was sound asleep and we had just finished our assignments in mathematics, I began to complain in a more desperate tone about the seemingly neutral way that Dyma was treating me. Valentina was silently listening to me. Her silence somehow was too long, and I suddenly felt that there was something behind that silence that I needed to know. I stopped in the middle of the sentence and looked very attentively into the eyes of my dearest friend Valya—the answer emerged by itself in my mind. I pronounced it slowly and distinctly, pausing after each word, "Valya, you are also in love with Dyma."

Valya lowered her eyes, and two lonely tears ran down on her cheeks. In a sorrowful voice she answered, "Olga, believe me, I didn't want to inflict a wound to your heart. Only for this reason I was silent."

Astonished with this revelation, I couldn't find words to reply to Valya's confession and slowly, like in a trance, I undressed

myself and went to bed. But I couldn't sleep. All kinds of imaginary scenarios about what would now happen between Valentina and me were appearing in my mind. *Could we remain now friends? Would our friendship circle be affected?* I don't know what had stricken me more—the discovery of Valya's love for the same boy I loved, or the fear of a sudden breaking-off of the extraordinary friendship between us.

One thing that changed in me from that moment was that my unreciprocated love became even more painful and hopeless. I didn't ask Valentina if Dyma ever showed her or told her that he loved her, or if she felt that their love was reciprocal. We just didn't talk anymore about him or our infatuation with him. Valentina and I continued to study together, as we did before, but that magic of openness that we had disappeared, and we could not have any more of those sincere bursts of confessions about our intimate feelings and hopes.

One day I went alone to visit our friend Tanya and asked her if Valentina had said anything to her about what had happened between the two of us. She said, "No. What happened?" I recounted to her exactly how I came to the revelation that Valentina was also in love with Dyma.

Tanya was a very good friend of both of us, and being neutral in regard to tender feelings for Dyma, she told me, "In all this time that the five of us have been friends, I have never observed any signs that Valya and Dyma were behaving with each other as more than just friends. And I haven't heard anyone in our class mention that they had detected any signs of affection between them."

And Tanya gave me very sage advice: "Give some time for your and Valya's emotions to cool down. Your strong friendship with each other should help you to overcome this. From what you tell me, you continue to study together as before." She paused for a while and added, "I think that both of you should wait until Dyma gives some signs about his feelings. Maybe he is not infatuated with either one of you."

It was sometime in the spring that the *Komsomol* organization at the Institute had a drive to enroll more students as members. Valentina didn't change her mind that it was better for me not to become a member. But one day, two female third-year students encountered me in the dormitory hall and began to work on me to

become a member of the *Komsomol*.

"We have your name as being a very good student who receives a stipend," one of them said to me, "but you are not listed as a member of the *Komsomol*. It's time for you to enroll before the end of the school year."

"This year for me is very important to dedicate all my time to study and to achieve good standing as a student," I replied. "I am not ready to take upon myself the duties that are required of a good member of the organization. I couldn't do it all, have time for studying, for going to the required meetings, and for conducting a load of activities that ought to be done for the *Komsomol*."

"That is the most absurd reason for not becoming a member!" said the other recruiter. "Don't you know that being a member of the *Komsomol* gives you also a better standing as a student?"

"I prefer to receive good grades by earning them by studying," I replied, "and not because I am being rewarded for being a member of the *Komsomol*."

"There is no use in convincing this stubborn girl to become a member," said the first recruiter. "She needs time to understand that it is in her interest to be a member." And they left, disappointed with their unsuccessful attempt to enroll me.

I was very shaken by this confrontation with the representatives of the political branch of the Institute and asked Valentina if there could be any repercussions for me from my refusal. But she dismissed my fears and said that the recruiters who'd confronted me were eager to fulfill their quota assigned for recruiting new members and that they couldn't do anything to damage my reputation as a good student.

On the first of May, 1941, our Institute, like all of the Moscow schools, institutes, organizations, factories, offices, and other places of work, was participating in the May Day² Parade on the Red Square. All students at the Institute were warned that attendance was compulsory, and all secretaries of the *Komsomol* cells were ordered to report the names of those who were absent that day. Students, faculty, and employees of the Institute were ordered to assemble very early in the morning in order to arrive on time to the designated place where we had to join the other institutes in the parade. The paraphernalia of red flags, banners, and the portraits of the communist leaders were distributed to us

at the Institute by members of the *Komsomol*. We marched a great distance across Moscow to reach the place where we would join the procession.

It was already afternoon when our column finally arrived at the entrance to the Red Square. The column of our Institute joined parallel with the columns of the other institutes to fill the width of Red Square. Everyone was marching in step with the loud music of brass bands and carrying numerous red flags with the large hammer-and-sickle symbol of the Soviet State, long banners with communist slogans, and huge portraits of Stalin, Lenin, and Marx. We marched across Red Square passing in front of Lenin's Mausoleum, on top of which were standing the leaders of the Communist Party, lazily waving their hands.

We had been on our feet from very early in the morning, and, by the time we crossed Red Square, we were very tired, thirsty, and hungry, but nobody dared to complain, fearing that the *Komsomol's* eavesdroppers might be everywhere. And ahead of us was a long line of other participants from the parade waiting to board the Metro and the streetcars to return to their destinations.

Notwithstanding all of these inconveniences, it could have been a very enjoyable and pleasant event for me on that warm and sunny spring day. But an uneasy feeling that it was compulsory, that I was forced to be there, spoiled it.

In May, on one of the days off, our group of friends decided to go to Gorky Park in the afternoon. Dyma had to work, and he promised to join us as soon as he could. We walked on the alleys of the park and fed the ducks swimming in the Moscow River. When it was time to go to the Metro station to meet Dyma, we decided that only one of us should go to encounter him. The rest of us would wait on the bench that we found conveniently located near the river.

I promptly said, "Valentina, you go." But she magnanimously declined my suggestion and said, "No, you go, Olga." I couldn't refuse this opportunity to walk alone with Dyma.

As it was agreed, I stood on the upper level of the Metro station near the escalator, watching the arriving passengers. Dyma was late and finally I saw him running fast toward the exit. He was in such a hurry that he fell before reaching the steps. I was embarrassed for him but decided not to mention to him that I saw it. He greeted me and told me, "I am sorry for being late. Did you

wait a long time for me?"

"It doesn't matter," I replied. "I am glad you could make it to join us."

"I hope that the others are not upset that I am late."

"I don't think so," I explained. "They are enjoying themselves in the park."

As we walked through the park, we talked casually as good friends about our common interests—nothing personal, and nothing that could have some special meaning of more than friendship. Being the two of us alone, which was very unusual, was a unique opportunity for him to show, or to say something that could have indicated his feelings if he liked me more than just as a good friend. But he didn't. He was just friendly as usual, but nothing more. Now I knew that my love was unreciprocated.

At the end of May, the final exams for the second semester began with German being held on the thirty-first, and I got a grade of "Good." The next exam was on the sixth of June in the Theory of Marxism-Leninism, the subject I detested. As usual, I was complaining that it was a waste of time to memorize all the dates of the revolutionary and Communist party events and the quotes from the teachings of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. On the day before the exam, all the secretaries of the *Komsomol* cells were called for a meeting at the Institute. That day, Valentina came back to the dormitory late in the afternoon and told me in strict confidentiality that the instructor of this class had prepared them for all the questions that would be asked tomorrow on the exam. She opened her notes and said, "Don't complain any more. Memorize only the answers to these questions."

On the sixth of June, we left our dormitory dressed in light clothes and white socks, happy that summer weather was here. Then, while we were taking the exams, we saw through the windows that it had begun to snow. The big white fluffy flakes were descending slowly and lazily to the ground, as if they were unsure that it was the right time and place for them to be. We waited for the streetcar and walked to the dormitory covered with snow, which was melting on our light clothing and making us wet and shivering from cold. When we arrived, our roommate Rita asked us, "Well, how did you do on your exams in the Theory of Marxism-Leninism?"

Valentina replied, "With all my coaching, Olga got a grade of

‘Good.’”

And I added, “But Valentina, of course, as a *Komsomol* member, couldn’t have had less than ‘Excellent.’”

On the eleventh of June, I passed the exam in theoretical mechanics with a grade of “Good.” After that Valentina and I began to get ready for the exam in higher mathematics³ that was to be held in the morning on the twenty-second of June.⁴

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1. See the chapters: “The New Ten-Years-School in Slavyansk” and “True Friendship and First Love.”
 2. International Labor Day.
 3. Calculus.
 4. June 22, 1941. See the chapter “Twenty-Second of June 1941.”



PART SIX

**Germany Invades the
Soviet Union**



Twenty-Second of June 1941

By Olga Gladky Verro

On the twenty-second of June 1941¹ at eight o'clock in the morning, my friend and roommate Valentina Zakharova² and I were among the first to enter the examination classroom on the third floor of the old building at the Moscow Power Institute. We hoped to quickly finish the written exam in mathematics because during the school year neither of us had ever had a grade below "Excellent." On all written exams the students were allowed to leave the classroom as soon as they handed in the examination sheets to the instructors.³

But this time, for some unknown reason, when we finished and handed in our exam papers, the instructors didn't allow us or any other student to leave the classroom; they told us to go back to our seats and wait until the end of the four-hour examination period.

Valentina and I just sat there looking at each other and observed what was going on in the classroom. We were surprised that our instructors were behaving in an unusually worried and restless manner; there was a tense and mysterious atmosphere at their table. Once in a while one of them would get out of the classroom and upon return would whisper something in the ears of the others, and they would shake their heads as in disbelief and cast very serious glances at each other.

They were distracted so much that they didn't pay much attention to what was going on in the classroom and didn't watch as usual to see if students were cheating. Valentina was able to pass a paper with the problem solution to one comrade *Komsomol*⁴ member, and not one of the instructors noticed it. It was obvious that they had something else on their minds—not the examinations and not the students.

Finally, exactly at noon, our instructors collected the exam papers from those students who were still struggling with the problems and announced that everybody could leave the

classroom. Valentina and I left, happy that we had succeeded on the written exam in mathematics, which was one of the most important subjects in our major of electrical engineering.

As we were walking down the stairs, we encountered Fimka Zusmanovich, my schoolmate from the Ten-Years-School⁵ in my hometown of Slavyansk, as he was going up. He stopped, saluted me, and asked, "Well, how did you react to the big news?"

"What big news?" I asked.

"What do you mean, 'what big news'?" he repeated with surprise. "Where have you been all morning?"

"We had our written exam in mathematics and came out of the classroom just now," I replied. "The instructors did not allow us to leave the classroom for four hours—until twelve o'clock."

"Well," wondered Fimka, "didn't you listen to the radio in the morning?"

"No. We don't have a radio in our room, and we didn't have time to go to the dormitory's study hall," I answered, almost annoyed with his questions. "And what is this 'big news' anyway?"

Slowly, and with a grave expression on his face Fimka replied, "The war with Germany has started!"

"Really?!!" I exclaimed with genuine surprise.

Valentina grabbed my hand I was holding on the railing and emitted only a long, fear-inspired sound, "O-o-oh!" Then she resolutely said, "I have to run to the *Komsomol* office! See you later in the dormitory."

"What is the matter with her?" asked Fimka. "Why did she have to run so fast?"

"She is the secretary of the *Komsomol* cell⁶ of our practical-exercises class."

"A-a-h," said Fimka, understanding why she was hurrying and commented, "Well, she will be very busy from now on."

"If you have any news from home," I told him, "please let me know."

"Alright," was his quick answer, and he resumed climbing the stairs to his exam room on the next floor.

I went slowly down and out of the building, trying to collect my thoughts on what I should do now. *I shall seek my father's advice immediately*, I thought and rushed to send him a telegram. Then I took the streetcar to our dormitory and went to the study

hall to listen to the news on the radio. The news was foreboding: "In a surprise attack, the German fascists have broken the Soviet border in many places and are engaging the Red Army troops in fearsome fighting..." This was followed by the usual propaganda slogans and an appeal to all citizens to rally for the defense of the motherland.

There was a great variety in the opinions of students who were coming in and out of the study hall. Some were sure that the war would be over soon; others were convinced that there would be a long struggle; some were predicting gas warfare; many were suggesting that we should go home to be with our families.

Valentina returned to the dormitory in the evening after the meeting of all major and minor leaders of the Institute's *Komsomol* organization. She told our roommate Rita and me that there was an immediate order to students to finish all exams as soon as possible. It was expected that the non-Moscovite students would not be allowed to leave Moscow, and all female students would be mobilized to work at the military factories in the city; the male students would be mobilized into the Red Army, or to dig trenches around the city.

"Wow!" I exclaimed, "Are the Germans marching so fast that the government expects them to arrive soon all the way to Moscow?!"

"Preparedness is the best defense," replied Valentina with the slogan that she had already picked up at the meeting of the *Komsomol* leaders.

There was also an order to have a complete blackout in the dormitory requiring us to cover our windows with blankets for the night and not let any light shine through. During the night we were awakened twice by air-raid alarms, and we had to go to the dormitory basement. Nobody knew if they were training alarms, or if there were really German airplanes flying toward Moscow. But the anti-aircraft guns were shooting for real, making an impressive noise and fireworks in the sky. During the alarm I joined a group of non-Muscovite students who were concerned about being forced to remain in Moscow. We all wanted to go home and reunite with our families in this difficult time. Somebody suggested, "Since this order is not yet official, we should go to the Institute's office as soon as possible and request a certificate stating that we are students on vacation until the fall

semester—it is required for the rail-tickets counter.”

But the *Komsomol* activists were mingling among the groups and interrupting any discussion of this kind. One of them came to our group and began to talk very loudly to suppress the voices of dissidents. “Comrades, those among you who start these discussions obviously want to desert from your duties to our motherland and to the Communist Party. We all have to go and work in the factories producing weapons for the war. We all have to contribute! It is our duty as members of the *Komsomol*.”

Somebody in the group timidly said, “I am not a member.” The activist was quick to give her an answer: “Those who are not yet members should take this occasion to become members of *Komsomol*, to be better organized and to give all of your strength to the Communist Party. Yes, all your strength!”

With so many of these *Komsomol* watchdogs moving around, no one could continue to discuss matters that could be considered as discontent. One by one, students began to leave the groups or just stand silently in the semi-darkness of the basement. But we’d found out what we needed to know—get those certificates immediately.

Finally, the sirens announced the end of the air-raid alarm, and, as we were returning to our rooms, we could hear the continuous noise of heavy vehicles rolling outside on the street. We went into the courtyard to find out what was going on, but the military guards didn’t allow us to go near the street. So we went back to our rooms, but we couldn’t see much from the windows. Without lighting on the street, we could detect only the shadows of slowly moving huge vehicles and unusual sounds. After long discussion we fell asleep with a troublesome feeling of the unknown waiting for us in the immediate future.

In the morning, we could see from the second-story windows facing Lefortovskiy Val a continuous column of heavy tanks that were rolling slowly on the street. They were coming out of a simple wooden storage building in the fenced yard next to our dormitory, proceeding through the wooden gate to the street. It was obvious that this innocent-looking yard full of street maintenance equipment was a camouflaged exit from a huge underground tank depot; the tanks were driving out all night and the rest of the day. By observing this spectacle of might, the war became suddenly more real and ominous. Now I knew that I had

to go home at any cost.

The next morning, I received a telegram from my father with a short and simple message: "Finish all exams, and immediately return home. Papa."

Valentina and I prepared ourselves for the oral exams in physics by cramming all night, and we finally fell asleep only in the wee hours of the morning. We were glad to find at the examination table our physics instructor of the practical-exercises class; he knew us very well, beginning with the institute's entrance examinations. We said to each other, "It will be easy—he shall not be too strict with us." But when I had to answer the questions that were on my exam sheet, I was not able to answer the most elementary questions.

"What is the matter with you?" my instructor asked. He shook his head as in disbelief that I didn't know such simple answers. "What time did you go to sleep last night?"

"After four o'clock this morning," I replied.

"If I was your father, I would have given you a good scolding," he said and added, "Go home and go to sleep. And don't study anymore. Come tomorrow morning well rested, and take the exam with a fresh mind. I will mark that you were not able to take the exam this morning."

Valentina was lucky to get her answers right, and she passed the exam with a grade of "Excellent."

"I couldn't think," I said to her. "My brain was completely blank."

The next morning I took my oral exam in physics with another instructor who didn't know me at all and received "Excellent" on my examination sheet. The rest of the exams were finished without enthusiasm or rigorous preparations. It all seemed so unimportant in the perspective of the war.

I procured from the institute's office the needed certificate⁷ but soon found out that it was almost impossible to depart from Moscow because too many people were trying to leave. There were long lines at all the ticket counters and one could never know what tickets were being sold at a particular counter. I envied my friend Zoya Litvinova,⁸ who was in her second year at Moscow's Institute of the Foreign Languages. She had finished her exams one week before the war had started and departed for home right away.

I went to look for Fimka in his dormitory and found him in the students' study hall.

"Are you still here?" I asked.

"And where am I supposed to be?" he replied.

"In the army, or digging trenches," I replied, thinking about many boys from our institute who had already been drafted.

"Well," he said with reluctance, "they are not yet drafting those who are not permanent residents of Moscow. I want to go home to see my parents first."

"To go home?" I wondered, "How do you hope to get tickets with all the people crowded at the rail station?"

"Well," he told me with a cunning smile of one who knows how to live by his own wits, "I have stayed several days at the rail station observing how they operate the ticket counters. There are two express trains going south. One is from Moscow and another that arrives from Leningrad early in the evening and goes all the way to Caucasia. They usually have only a small number of tickets to board this train in Moscow. Those tickets are sold in a hurry before the arrival of the train or while the train is in the station for a short time. I saw that sometimes the passengers run with the tickets right from the counter to board the train."

I became excited and pleaded with him, "Fimka, you should show me the ticket counter where I can wait for it. Two nights ago I left some of my luggage in the baggage depository at the rail station. If I could only buy a ticket, I will be ready to go."

"You see, it is not as easy as you think," he answered. "There are two ticket counters that sell the tickets for that train, and one never knows which one they will open that evening. Two persons are needed—one should stay at one counter and the other at another. Whoever winds up at the right counter buys the two tickets. You understand?"

"Alright!" I exclaimed, "From this evening we shall start to stand in two lines at the ticket counters. But if they ask me for your student certificate?"

"Tell them that your young brother was here visiting, and now you are both going home."

"You are full of tricks, Fimka," I commented.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked me. "You are an intelligent girl, but in difficult moments you are not capable of finding a way out!"

"You see, Fimka, I am a Ukrainian, and you are a Jew. Who knows how you Jews are able to be so shrewd and find out the solution to difficult situations. We Ukrainians can't be compared to you Jews in these matters."

"It's probably a trait developed in our people through the ages as a means for our survival," he answered proudly.

One week passed by without luck, as Fimka and I waited every evening at the station at the two ticket counters. My fear and anxiety of not being able to get on the train and go home were becoming stronger every day. Valentina and I had very little time to see or talk to each other. She was busy all day at the *Komsomol* office and was sleeping when I returned home at night, and I was sleeping in the morning when she was leaving.

Our friendship was based on our intellectual affinity and common interest in mathematics and physics, and it was sustained by our enthusiasm in solving problems and completing the assignments. Eventually, it led us to sharing our intimate thoughts about our longings for love and our infatuations with one special boy. But, after I found out that she was in love with the same boy that she knew I loved, our friend Dyma Karklin, we stopped sharing our intimate thoughts and lost much of the closeness that we had before. The beginning of the war pulled us apart even more. Now she was all involved in the *Komsomol* activities for war preparedness, and I was interested only in finding a way to get home as soon as possible. Suddenly, we had lost all common interests, and I felt that our friendship was quickly falling apart.

At the end of the week, there was an order from a dormitory office to free our rooms, and we had to find another place to live because the buildings would be used to house the drafted men. I packed my comforter, pillow, and nonessential items to take for safekeeping to my schoolmate Lena Tarasenko;⁹ who now lived with her parents in Moscow. I had visited her a couple of times, and we had established a good relationship; I was hoping that one day I could get my things back. When I finished packing, I could hardly lift that huge bundle.

To get to Lena's I had to first take a streetcar and then the Metro, which had a station very close to her apartment complex. One young man in military uniform saw that I was dragging my bundle on the floor and helped me to get it out of the Metro train

and up the stairs to the exit.

Thick fog was filling the air, and I couldn't see more than a few meters ahead. I couldn't orient myself and was afraid that I would not find the apartment complex. The thick fog camouflaged the multi-story brick buildings, and they all looked alike. Finally, somebody who lived there helped me to find the right building number, and I dragged my bundle up several flights of the stairs to Lena's apartment. She and her parents were surprised to see me and insisted that I stay overnight and return to my dormitory in the morning.

I told Lena and her parents how Fimka and I were trying to get the tickets for the train to return home. They approved that it was the right thing for me to do to return to Slavyansk and stay with my parents during the war. I slept with Lena in her bed, and we talked long into the night remembering our school days, her cousin Musya Davidenko, and we shared our fears about the unknown future that was ahead of us. Lena told me that she had enrolled in the Aeronautics Institute not because she was interested in specializing in aeronautics, but because she hoped to find a handsome pilot and marry him. But now all of her dreams had fallen apart because all able-bodied young men had quickly been mobilized; only the girls and the men disqualified from military service remained at the institute. In the morning we embraced each other and said goodbye, wishing that the war would be over soon.

When I returned to the dormitory, our mattresses had already been taken to the storage room, and we had to sleep on the bed's metal spring. Valentina gave me one of her blankets to put on the spring, and I used some folded piece of clothing as a pillow.

One afternoon a few days later, I had a terrible headache. I was lying on my bed facing the wall to keep the light from bothering my eyes. I was trying to rest before going with Fimka to the rail station. Somebody knocked on the door. Without getting up, I said, "Come in," and turned my head only to see who it was. It was Dyma Karklin.¹⁰

"Hello," he said, "I am sorry to disturb you. Where is Valentina?"

His asking right away about Valentina was like an arrow in my heart. I was hurt that he hadn't come to see me. I turned my face back toward the wall and answered him coldly, "She is, as

usual at this time of the day, somewhere with the *Komsomol* activists." And I added in a suffering voice, "Please excuse me for not getting up. I have terrible headache."

"I am sorry that you don't feel well," he told me gently and asked, "Do you mind if I wait for her? I would sit here quietly on the chair."

"It is all right with me," I answered deliberately with indifference. "But you have to wait for several hours; she is returning very late in the afternoon."

"No, I cannot wait that long. I will try to come tomorrow," he answered with disappointment.

"If you want to leave her a message," I said, "there is a pencil and paper on the table." Then I thought that maybe it was the last time I would see him and added in a soft voice, "I am not sure if I will see her tonight because I am going to the rail station hoping to depart home—that's if I am lucky enough to get tickets."

Dyma got up and said, "Well, good luck to you for tonight." And patting me gently on my shoulder added, "And goodbye. If I don't see you tomorrow, I will know that you departed home."

Without turning my face toward him, I answered, "Thank you. Good-bye, Dyma."

That night, again Fimka and I couldn't get tickets. This time, when I returned to my room, I woke up Valentina and told her that Dyma was looking for her and that he would be back tomorrow afternoon.

"I wonder why he was not working today," she said. "I will try to return sooner tomorrow." We didn't discuss him anymore. She asked me if it had again been an unsuccessful night at the train station. Then she said in a businesslike manner that, if we went there every night, eventually we would succeed.

The next day both our friends Dyma and Misha came to our room. They told us that they came to say goodbye. While they were waiting for a military draft, they were mobilized to dig the trenches around Moscow and were departing the next morning.

"It is hard for me to leave my small sister and old grandmother. I don't know how they will do on their own without me," said Dyma, emitting a deep sigh. "But what can I do? I received the card to present myself tomorrow morning at the exact time at the place of departure. If I don't go, I will be considered a deserter. Nobody knows who is in charge of it. In the

Militsia Precinct they told me that they don't know where I can go and complain about it. They just said to go tomorrow morning and talk to whoever is in charge of the group."

Sitting at the table, Dyma placed his head between the palms of his hands, as if he wanted to squeeze the solution to his problem from his brain. After a while he explained, "You probably don't know that shortly before the war with Finland¹¹ began, my father and mother disappeared from their workplace. Their co-workers told us that NKVD¹² agents came to their office and told my parents to go with them out of the office, and they did not return the following day and the days after. And they concluded, 'We assumed that they were arrested.' We also suspected that they were arrested because their national origin was Finnish. We hoped that the worst that happened to them was being sent to the concentration camp in Siberia. We didn't know anything about them until recently, when one man, who by sheer miracle came out of their concentration camp, brought us a short note from my parents. They wrote that they were alive but that we should not expect them to return home soon." With a big sigh, Dyma concluded, "What I can do against impossible odds?"

Valentina, who was listening in silence, said, "Dyma, give me your address," and she handed him a piece of paper and pencil. "I will try to go and see your little sister and your grandmother." Then she reassured him, "If I can help them, I will."

Dyma thanked her and wrote his address.

All this time Misha, as usual, was sitting very quietly; one never knew what he was thinking about. But one could see that he was more pensive than usual and in low spirits.

I felt sorry for the boys and couldn't keep myself from crying. Valentina said to me with reproach, "Olga, stop whimpering—the boys are going to do their duty." Then, turning to the boys, she concluded solemnly, as if she were closing a meeting of the *Komsomol* cell, "Goodbye, boys! Take care of yourselves!" And, since the boys weren't getting up, she prompted them, "Up! Up! Write to us, and keep us informed about your whereabouts."

Dyma and Misha slowly got up and shook our hands while saying, "Goodbye!"

"Goodbye!" we replied, and they left.

I was disappointed with Valentina's attitude, which kept the last visit of our friends almost formal and didn't allow much

sentimentality. We didn't even embrace or hug each other, just shook hands, and they were gone. I felt sad, weak, and confused and sat on my bed as if in a trance. It all seemed to be so unreal. I thought that other boys from our dormitory were also disappearing fast. Some came to say goodbye; others just vanished without a trace. Only the girls remained.

At that moment I was called downstairs to receive a telegram. It was again from my father. He probably was not sure if I had received the first one. I came back to our room and read it to Valentina: "Finish exams, and return home. Papa."

She answered reassuringly but without reproach, "You, Olga, don't have the *Komsomol* spirit. It is better that you go home."

In a few days the messenger from the office of the Secretary of *Komsomol* came to the dormitory, knocked on all rooms, and gave an order to immediately go to the lecture hall in the main building of the institute, "You will be assigned for work in the factories."

I remained in my room, hoping that she was gone. After a while she knocked at my door again. "Why are you still here?" she asked me angrily.

"I cannot go because I received a telegram to return home immediately."

"What are you talking about? There is nothing more important than your duty to serve your country. You cannot refuse to go to work." She pointed harshly toward the door and ordered, "Ma-a-rch! If you hurry, you can still make it on time." And she pushed me out of my room.

I hurried down the stairs but went to Fimka's dormitory and told him what had happened.

"They will be placing only the girls in the factories. The boys will be drafted soon. It's time for us to move fast," he said. "Go back to your room, lock the door, and don't answer to anybody until I come; then we will go to the railroad station. This afternoon we will go there earlier, and maybe we will be among the first in line."

We stood in line all afternoon and into the evening. I was standing in line for the trains that were departing from Moscow and Fimka for the trains that were arriving in Moscow from Leningrad and proceeding south. Once in a while one of the ticket windows opened, and all who were close crowded in to hear what tickets were available. This time Fimka was very close to the

ticket window. I saw that Fimka was second in line when the window opened. Then he was talking to the teller, and, finally, I could see him as he tried to get out through the crowd, holding the tickets in his raised hand.

I ran toward him. "Have you succeeded?" I asked anxiously, not believing what I had seen.

"Yes, I got them," he answered, "but the train is arriving in thirty minutes. We don't have time to take the streetcar to get our luggage from the dormitory. I decided to leave it there."

"Maybe we can go in a taxi?" I suggested.

"We cannot risk being late for the train," he dismissed my idea.

"You are right," I agreed. "I will also leave it in the room. Valentina will take it. I will take only the luggage I have here at the station in the storage room. It really doesn't matter if I lose everything, as long as I go home."

We went to the telegraph office and wired telegrams to our parents that we were on our way home. Then we went on the platform to wait for the train; we were surprised to see that it was almost empty since only the passengers with tickets were allowed there.

When we boarded the train, I thought, *I am really going home*. And I felt like a huge heavy weight had fallen from my shoulders. In our compartment there was only one upper shelf free where one could sleep, and Fimka climbed quickly up. I sat on the available seat below. During the night he allowed me to climb up for a while to take a short nap.

The train did not travel according to schedule. Everywhere the priority was for the military trains, and ours had to wait for hours in the large stations. Only early in the morning of the second day of traveling did we reach Slavyansk Station. Our train was more than ten hours late.

It was dawn. My father had waited the whole night at the station and looked tired. The embrace was long and in silence. "My dear *Lyalyechka*," my father finally said, "I was already losing hope that you could pull yourself out of the grip of Moscow!"

"If it weren't for Fimka," I answered, "and for his Jewish wit, I would not be here today. He was able to figure out how to outsmart the Soviet bureaucracy to get us out of there..."

Fimka couldn't find his father, who had probably decided that

we couldn't get on the train and had left. We took the first local branch train Vyetka into town. At parting, my father thanked Fimka for helping me come home.

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1. The date the war between Germany and the Soviet Union started.
 2. See the chapter "Moscow Power Institute."
 3. Olga Gladky Verro, *Quando Incominciata la Guerra* (in Italian), MS., (Turin, Italy, 1956)., ed. and trans. by the author.
 4. See the chapter "Moscow Power Institute."
 5. See the chapter "True Friendship and First Love."
 6. See the chapter "Moscow Power Institute."
 7. From a copy of the certificate that I was a student of the MEI and was given this certificate for the rail ticket office for departing home for summer vacation; it was dated July 2, 1941. See the Appendix chapter "Twenty-Second of June 1941"
 8. See the chapter "Moscow Power Institute."
 9. Idem.
 10. Idem.
 11. In 1938, the Soviet Union attacked Finland. See the chapter "Becoming Conscious of My Political Views."
 12. People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs.



The War Comes Closer to Home

By Olga Gladky Verro

On the twenty-second of June 1941, Germans attacked the Soviet Union. In my hometown Slavyansk, the frenzy of the war began to turn everything upside-down. The general mobilization by the army of all able-bodied young men was going on as quickly as they were able to process them. There was also a mobilization of younger boys and girls to dig trenches on the outskirts of the town as a defense against the German tanks.

I went to the office of NKVD for residency registration¹ on the eighth of July, 1941, but after that my father ordered me to stay in the house and not to go anywhere. Although the Germans were far away in the Western Ukraine, recently annexed to the Soviet Union from Poland, in our town some preparations had already begun for an evacuation of equipment and key personnel from the major factories.

But the most terrible news was that the NKVD was snatching at an unusual pace many political suspects. Each day one could hear the names of those who had disappeared without a trace into the cellars of the hated People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs.

Another exceptional phenomenon was that most of the Jews were leaving their possessions and escaping, or more acceptably said, "evacuating" to the interior parts of the Soviet Union. The rumors were that the Germans were rounding up Jews and shooting whole families. The rest of the population didn't believe these rumors, and the general opinion was that it was an excuse for the Jews to run away to safer locations and to evade digging trenches and undergoing other hardships of the war.

One day, when I dared to go to the market, I encountered on the street my best school girlfriend, Syma Shyrman, who was a Jew. She was glad to see me but at the same time sad about having to say goodbye. She said they were lucky to have found a

way to load their furniture on the train, and they were leaving the next day for Orenburg, a town deep in the interior of Russia. When I told her that I thought that it was probably not true that they would be killed by the Germans, Syma told me that they knew from the most reliable Jewish sources that, regrettably, it was true, and that they had no choice but to save themselves by fleeing as far away as they could. I wished her good luck, and we embraced. It was the last time I saw Syma.

All young boys of our age were sent to the front as soon as they were drafted, without wasting time for military training. This happened to many boys from our school; among them was my and Syma's school friend and my neighbor Yasha Voronov,² who left for the front line shortly before I returned from Moscow.

Not even one month later, his uncle with whom he lived received a notice that Yasha had been lost in action. His Aunt Fanya worked at the hospital where every day the wounded arrived from the front. She asked all of those who could speak, "Did you know Yasha Voronov?" And she would describe how he looked and how tall he was.

One day, a wounded young man who was from our town told her, "Sister, I knew Yasha. I was with him when he died. Don't let his mother know the details of his tragic death. It happened so quickly. After we were dressed in military uniforms and they had showed us how to use guns, we were put on trucks that drove us toward the front line. It was a very long column of trucks driving on the dusty road between the potato fields. We were still very far from the front line. Suddenly German airplanes appeared in the sky and started to dump bombs. And, as if that was not enough, they also opened machine-gun fire. Everybody jumped out of the trucks. Some, like me, who right away threw themselves on the ground, were able to save themselves. But Yasha decided to run farther away from the road. During the explosion of one of the bombs, we saw Yasha's body fly high in the air, and, after the airplanes were gone, we found parts of his body dispersed all over the field. We collected what we could find, wrapped them in his military coat, and buried him in the middle of the potato field."

This was the first painful news of the war for my little heart. For the last two years in school, Kostya Syrota and I had tutored Yasha and Syma in all subjects and were able to help them

graduate. The four of us were very fond of each other, and there was a bond of friendship and loyalty among us. I couldn't imagine Yasha being dead. I was glad that Kostya was finishing an accelerated course for officers in the Soviet Flot³ in Leningrad. At least, they were training them and not sending them to the slaughter at the front! I wrote to Kostya a letter describing the tragic death of our friend Yasha. I don't know if he received it, but I never received an answer from him.

Valentina wrote me only one letter, in which she said that she was working at night in the ammunition factory and during the day was attending accelerated courses at the Power Institute. She didn't want to lose the time, and this could help her to graduate sooner. She wrote that without me she didn't feel stimulated to study hard as we used to do together. Also, it didn't help her being tired, and her memory was not the same as it used to be. She didn't say one word about our friends, Dyma and Misha. I thought she probably didn't know anything about them at that time.

I felt lonely and nostalgic for those days when I was in the company of my friends from school or from the Institute. At that time, all young girls were hiding from being drafted to dig trenches, and I couldn't find anybody from my school to keep me company.

Fimka told me that he was returning to Moscow, where he was hoping to be accepted in the accelerated course at our Power Institute and maybe, as a student, to be deferred from the draft. I doubted that it was possible but wished him luck. I told him that maybe he knew how to keep himself from being drafted the same way as he handled getting us train tickets from Moscow. But soon I heard that he had returned again to our town and after a couple of weeks departed back to Moscow. This way, he was evading the rules of registering with the draft boards here and there.

I had mixed feelings about Fimka's trickery in evading the draft. On one side, I was sympathetic to his desperate attempts to save himself from being sent to the slaughter, yet on the other side, I resented his trickery while Yasha and many others boys from our school were drafted, wounded, and even killed. Soon his parents evacuated to somewhere behind the Ural Mountains, and I didn't hear anything about him anymore. Many years later I found out that he was also killed in the war.

Toward the end of July 1941, my mother's older brother, Nikolay,⁴ arrived in Slavyansk. With him were also his wife, Katya, his older son Nikolay's wife, Lidia, with her baby son, Boris.⁵ My uncle and his family had evacuated in a hurry from Stanislav⁶ after the Germans launched a surprise attack on the Polish and Western Ukraine border.

Uncle Nikolay came to see us on the first day that he arrived in our town. Since he had just arrived from the Western Ukraine, which was close to the front, he had a lot to tell us, and we were all curious to hear about what was going on at the front line. Everybody knew that Soviet radio and newspapers weren't telling the truth; as usual, they were telling only blatant propaganda. People had to rely more on the rumors passed by word of mouth by those who were coming from the Western provinces, by those who'd seen or experienced themselves, or heard from others about what was really going on at the front. My father hoped that my uncle knew more than we did about the situation over there.

At the beginning, my father was very cautious not to expose me to the anti-Soviet opinions of my uncle, who was not afraid to talk in my presence. I knew that my father was trying to protect my uncle, himself, and me. The NKVD was still very active in our town, and many people we personally knew had disappeared quite recently; therefore, any one of us could be grabbed by their paws. But Uncle Kolya⁷ convinced my father that I was old enough to know what was going on and what to expect in the near future.

I knew my uncle very little, because I had seen him only once or twice when I was very young. As I listened to my uncle, I thought he and my father would get along very well. My uncle was a man of old traditions, he hated the Bolsheviks, and remembered with nostalgia the good old times of the Tsar; this was enough to make my father appreciate him.

My father was working as a proofreader at the local newspaper at night, and he had plenty of time during the day to sit and listen to his brother-in-law. My father, mother, and I sat in the kitchen close to each other like conspirators and pricked up our ears to hear what my uncle Kolya was telling us almost in a whispering tone of voice. It created an atmosphere of mystery, because our house was located deep in the courtyard, and nobody could hear anything on the street even if one would scream.

My uncle was confirming many things that we had already heard from the rumors that reached our town. He told us it was true that Germans were moving forward at full speed. The soldiers who were returning home recounted that the Red Army was completely unprepared for the war and that the generals were sending the young men just with guns in their hands to fight the German tanks. With a trembling voice my uncle said, "Only thinking about this, my heart is hurting for my two sons, who were among the first ones to be drafted. My only hope is that both have graduated from the Kharkovsky Physical Education Institute, and this means that they would not be just simple soldiers but would be placed in command of some military units. Let's hope that the Almighty God will protect them."

There was a moment of silence as my uncle Kolya was recuperating from his emotional state. Then he continued to tell us what he had heard about events on the front. "In addition to the carnage that the young recruits are condemned to by the generals, the Ukrainian soldiers don't want to fight on their own soil, so they raise their hands and surrender, or just desert and run home."

As to what was happening on the other side of the front occupied by the Germans, my uncle said that what he had heard was mostly hearsay passed from mouth to mouth by those people who found a way to cross from one side of the front to another, mostly to return home or to their relatives. The most widely spread rumor was that the Germans promised to return the land that was taken from the peasants by the Soviets, as much land as they wanted to cultivate. For this reason, in the Ukrainian villages the peasants were greeting Germans with bread and salt—the Ukrainian custom of welcoming important people—and rejoicing that finally liberation from the Red Devil had arrived. "No wonder muzhiks give Germans such hospitality and support," he concluded.

Then my uncle added with enthusiasm in his voice, "But most impressive of all for the population is that in the villages and towns occupied by the Germans, they allow people right away to reconstruct the churches that the Red antichrist transformed into clubs and movie theaters." He had heard that, in the occupied towns, the Germans immediately started reconstructing the factories and electric power stations, which the Soviets had blown

up. Also, the Germans quickly established law and order; they introduced a rationing system and regulated distribution of bread for the working people.

Then Uncle Kolya said that there were some stories that were very sad. "It seems to be true that Germans shoot all Jews. Nobody knows why they do that. And, although the mass executions are abhorrent to most people, the Ukrainian populace does not decry it openly, because anti-Semitism still exists, and an old prejudice against the Jews that has survived for centuries is hard to eradicate. But the Jews got the word about this danger from the Germans, and most of them are escaping, or evacuating, as far as they can into the interior of Russia."

He continued to tell that in all towns that he traveled through the situation was the same: all Communist Party bosses, Soviet officials, and directors of all kinds of factories, mills, or other industrial and commercial establishments, and all heads of political organizations were evacuating their families in a hurry into the far regions of Russia. Many factories were dismantling the machinery, loading it on the trains, and shipping it all behind the Ural Mountains. The technical schools and the institutes were also packing and moving the essential laboratories, books, and documents to assigned destinations. All that could not be taken with them was to be blown up.

My uncle concluded, "It appears that the Red Army has no intentions of defending Ukraine. All they are doing now is slowing down the advance of the Germans to have the time to move as much of the industry as possible into the interior regions and to evacuate those who will be in charge of it in the new place."

Then he added with irony in his voice, "Only the general population remains in their homes, in their villages, hamlets, towns, and cities. They wait patiently for the Soviet authorities, Communist Party bosses, and NKVD agents to leave. Common people are waiting for the Germans, hoping they will be the liberators from the Bolsheviks' oppression."

After my uncle had finished telling all he knew, he and my father listened to the radio bulletins in Russian, Bulgarian, and Polish from Bulgaria and Poland to find out and to mark on the map how far the Germans had advanced. My father would compare this information with that printed in the local newspaper

where he worked; returning home, he would comment with disgust, “Lies, lies, blatant lies! It’s the same Soviet propaganda!”

During the months of July and August, Soviet authorities in our town were trying to maintain an appearance of national emergency and preparations to defend our town. They continued to send brigades to dig trenches around the town under the command of lower-ranking communists, who didn’t know anything about military strategy or topography. It didn’t matter where they were digging; all that they were concerned with was how many meters their brigade had dug in a day. The agents of the NKVD were obsessed with finding spies, traitors, and saboteurs. They relentlessly arrested suspects, and every day one could find out the new names of those who’d been taken from their homes at night. Everybody who didn’t plan to evacuate continued to work in the same place as before. Law and order were maintained. There was a shortage of those foods that had to be brought from other places on the railroad, because priority was given to the military shipments and to evacuation trains.

The Germans were advancing very fast. By the beginning of September, the rumors were that Kiev and Kharkov were already in their hands, but there was no official confirmation in the newspapers or on the radio. In Slavyansk, all top Communist bosses had evacuated their families; most Jewish families departed, too, and rumors were spreading about the factories being prepared with explosives to be blown up. My uncle Igor told us that this was true in the Soda Factory where he worked.

At about that time, we received a telegram from my mother’s sister Nyusya, who was in Mongolia on a medical expedition⁸ to provide medical care to the Mongol population in the remote areas. She wrote: “Flying to Kazan with my daughter Svetlana. Nyusya.” It was the first time we had heard she had a daughter, and it was the last time that we heard from her.

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1. From the passport page.
 2. See the chapter: “True Friendship and First Love.”
 3. Navy.
 4. See the chapter “Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy.”
 5. See the chapter “Volodya and Kotik Are Growing Up.”

6. Town of Stanislavov, Western Ukraine was annexed to the Soviet Union from Poland in 1939.
7. Nickname for Nikolay.
8. See the chapters “Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya” and “Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria Outbreak.”



Three Days of Anarchy

By Olga Gladky Verro

One night in the last days of October 1941, my father returned from the newspaper's office earlier than usual. He said that his boss, Comrade Mukhin, was in a hurry to close the printing house that evening. He gave the keys to Maria Sergeyevna Litvinova¹ and asked her to come early in the morning to open the printing house and to distribute the newspapers to the vendors.

During the night we heard a lot of movement of vehicles on the main roads and heard some explosions; then we could see in the sky the glow of a fire in the direction of the Slavyansk Station. Then everything became very quiet, as if the whole world were suddenly standing still.

Very early in the morning, when we woke up, the town was enveloped in an eerie calm and silence. The first courageous people who dared to venture on the streets found out very quickly that the town had been abandoned by the Soviet authorities, by *Militsia*, by NKVD, and by the military. The news spread rapidly around the town, and suddenly the streets were full of people who knew that there was no one in charge. Anarchy is a very scary thing; all restraints that keep human behavior in check become broken, and savage instincts take over without fear of consequences.

The glow in the sky that we had seen during the night came from a grain storehouse that caught fire after the explosion and was still smoldering. The grain was scattered in the storehouse yard and on the adjacent street. The population of the town and vicinities rushed there with all kinds of containers: bags, boxes, and carts. To have grain meant to have bread, and everyone was thinking about having enough of it for the unknown future. My mother and I took two sacks and followed the stream of people to get what we could find. My mother insisted that my father remain in the house because there were rumors that at the last moment all men would be rounded up and taken into the Red Army. There

were a lot of people at the grain storehouse yard. Everybody filled their containers with grain, took them home, and returned many times for more. We filled our sacks half-full according to what we could carry on our backs and returned only once. When all the clean grain was gone, the remaining grain hot and half-burned, was taken.

Those who lived close by, like my mother's cousin Khrystya, filled rooms, cellars, and shacks with the grain—they knew that grain was more precious than gold. The next day one could not find even a single kernel on the ground around the still smoldering pieces of a roof and blackened-by-smoke cement columns, which remained as witnesses of the tragic end of the grain storehouse.

After the grain was all gone, it was time to ransack the rest of the town. All stores, shops, and offices were plundered with the savagery that only anarchy could bring. One could not observe such behavior in people on any other occasion. I remember seeing what happened in the office supply store, which was just around the corner from our street. The mob had smashed the large, heavy glass store window, which now had a huge hole with sharp, pointed edges. It allowed easy entry if one would bend forward. Somebody from the inside opened the door, and I entered the store with others. But the spirit of wickedness enticed some men to enter through the hole in the window, as if they defied the commonly accepted entryway by thinking, "Hey, this is one time in my life that I can enter through the window. Why not try it? Here I am!"

Everyone quickly assessed the merchandise on the shelves, evaluating its worth. "What kind of goodies I can find here? What is in this bottle? The ink? I don't need it." And the bottle of ink was thrown on the floor. "What is this?—Glue. I might need it." And several bottles of glue were pocketed. If there were items on the shelves that were not needed, some men would scoop it wildly in one sweep onto the floor. One man grabbed a bunch of long wooden rulers; another one, a stack of notebooks. And one huge man found a heap of blotter paper and loudly announced walking with it out the door, "This will come handy! It will be soft to clean my ass!" One woman was happy to take one big box of pens and pencils. And someone was throwing erasers through the hole in the window at the crowd outside.

Closer to the center of town the crowd invaded the Town Soviet² offices. From the open windows of the first and the second floor all kinds of papers were flying out. The November wind whirled them up and down like flocks of birds, finally depositing them on the street, which began looking all white, as if it were covered with snow. People were carrying desks, chairs, bookcases, and cabinets from the offices. But most people were searching for food in the food stores. However, they found empty shelves there because the store employees had already cleaned everything out several days before.

In one storehouse with few windows, some men had discovered cases with bottles that in semi-darkness they believed to be vodka, but their joy quickly dissolved, as it was only mineral water. The men became so furious that they pushed the whole case out of the second story window. It landed on the sidewalk with a loud “Chia-f-f!” And for a few minutes the fizz from the effervescent water in the broken bottles hissed like a huge snake, “Sh-sh-sh... Sh-sh-sh... Sh-sh-sh...”

One man came out with a bottle in his hand, broke the neck of the bottle against the edge of a concrete step, and said to himself, “E-e-hi-i, let’s drink some of this water for the health of those...” And he inserted a couple of censored words. “They left us mineral water!” He took a big sip from the bottle and then tossed it against the wall, shouting, “This rubbish can drink only those with weak stomach!”

On the side street toward the market, several men broke down the heavy door of a basement warehouse. There were so many people waiting that not everyone could get inside. There, for some unknown reason, almost all kinds of products remained intact: cases of laundry soap, bottles of sunflower oil, and other household items. It was a big find for the people who were disillusioned with the empty food stores. Each took as much of these heavy items as he could carry. Some would grab a case of soap, leave it in the middle of the floor, and run to grab a case with bottles of oil, or one with rice.

But there were so many people that it was harder to get out than in. Men and women pushed, screamed, and swore at each other, but while there was plenty to take, they didn’t fight. When only a few boxes remained, the stronger ones were snatching the cases from the hands of the weaker ones, as if it were their

inherent right. All day and night there was continuous coming and going of people carrying everything and anything they could find. When they finished with the stores, warehouses, and public offices, they turned to the abandoned houses and apartments of the communist bosses, *militiionyers*, NKVD agents, and Jews. One could see people carrying mattresses, pillows, tables, chairs, and all kinds of household items that those who had fled in a hurry were not able to take with them.

On the third day, the fury of plundering slowed down but now it was time for searching and hauling with carts all sorts of heavy stuff, coal and wood for burning in the stoves. This was found in the basements and sheds of the abandoned houses, apartments, and in the yards of the mutilated-by-the explosions factories. It was tedious and heavy work, but everybody knew that winter was not far away.

After three days of looting, most people calmed down and began taking time to make an inventory of the stuff that they had hauled home. All obvious places were cleaned out down to the last item that could be taken. The only place in town that was not violated by the mob was the NKVD headquarters. No one dared open the gate of that hated institution, fearing that it was booby-trapped.

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1. See the chapter "The Newspaper's Proofreader."
 2. Town Hall.



The Germans Arrive in Slavyansk

By Olga Gladky Verro

After three days of anarchy and plunder in our town of Slavyansk, people began to take inventory of plundered goods. Some grabbed a case of soap, or a bag of sugar, or had good fortune in finding various goods in the homes and apartments abandoned by families of Communist Party members, Soviet officials, or Jews. But most didn't find everything they would need for their families during the uncertain time that everybody anticipated.¹

On the 26th of October, 1941, on the fourth day after the Soviets retreated from the town, the people crowded the market with all kinds of goods. Nothing was for sale; nobody wanted to be paid in rubles, which suddenly became completely worthless. Commerce had reversed itself to the ancient form of barter. There were even some peasants who came from the nearby villages with eggs, milk, butter, sour cream, and some vegetables that were bartered for soap, sugar, clothing, or whatever else the town folks were offering and the peasants needed.

Those who came late displayed their merchandise on cloth spread on the ground, but those who came early displayed it on wooden tables fixed to the ground, for which they now didn't have to pay rent to the collector from the Town Soviet. They patiently waited for the barterers to approach them with offers. One would ask a middle-aged peasant woman, "Auntie, what do you want in exchange for a liter of milk, a cup of sugar, or a piece of laundry soap?" If the woman needed the merchandise, the exchange was made; if she wanted something else, she would wait for the right offers.

The market was not only a place where people could barter their goods, it also was a forum where the latest news about the war was passed by word of mouth. That morning, my mother and

I also went to the market to find some dairy products from the peasants.

We were looking at the merchandise displayed on the market tables facing Karl Marx Street. Suddenly, we became aware that the lively sounds of the bargaining people had become subdued, and we saw that people were turning their heads in the direction of the street. At first, we couldn't see what was going on over there, except that two men and a woman were standing in the middle of the road. Then we heard the murmur of voices coming in waves as the people passed the news from those who were standing closer to the street. Finally, one word reached us: "Germans."

All eyes pointed in that direction. After a few minutes we saw a patrol of not more than twenty-five or thirty German soldiers marching toward the center of town. From their slow pace one could infer that they were tired from walking a long distance. They had guns across their shoulders and military backpacks on their backs. They didn't show any signs of being worried about hostile reaction from the population. It seemed that they were used to finding the towns abandoned by the Red Army and the Soviet authorities and didn't expect any military resistance; on the contrary, it seemed that they were expecting a friendly reception from the Ukrainian population. In fact, the people at the market observed them with curiosity, but without hostility or fear, and some saluted them by waving their hands.

The two men and the woman standing in the middle of the street were waiting for the German column to come closer. The two men had removed their hats and were holding them in their hands, and the woman standing between them was holding a tray covered with a white embroidered *rushnik*.² On the tray was a round loaf of bread and a small saucer with salt, a Ukrainian custom of welcoming very important people or authorities.

The German officer who was walking ahead of the column stopped a few steps before the welcoming party and gave a command to his soldiers to stop. The two men and the woman bowed their heads and greeted them in Ukrainian, "*Dobro Pozhaluvat!*"³ The officer shook hands with the two men and accepted the tray with the gift from the woman, saying in German, "*Danke schön!*"⁴ Then he entrusted the tray to one of the soldiers and gave a command to resume the march toward the

center of town. My mother and I rushed home to tell the news to my father, whom we hadn't allowed to go out on the street.

Later that morning, more German troops entered the town and immediately set up their military headquarters, which they called *Kommandantur*. The military commanding officer in charge of *Kommandantur* was called *Kommandant*. In less than a week they established order in our town to a degree that only Germans are capable of. Right from the first day, they posted the bulletins with the *Kommandant's* orders printed in Ukrainian. He ordered a sunset-to-dawn curfew and warned that any sabotage acts or partisan activities would be punishable by death.

One of the first things the Germans did produced a big shock on the population of our town—they opened wide and entered the gate of the NKVD Headquarters leading to the courtyard and building. No one from the local people had dared to enter it during the three days of plundering, because everybody feared that, before abandoning the town, the NKVD agents had dynamited their headquarters.

The Germans kept the gate open in full view of the people gathered on the street and began, with the help of local men, to pull bodies out of the manhole leading to the underground sewer drain. They were the bodies of people who had disappeared from their homes in the last few months and weeks. Among them was found the body of the hunchback professor of the Ukrainian language who had talked too much about "Free Ukraine," independent from Russian domination.

The people came closer and stood around the open gate of the former NKVD courtyard, observing with a somber outrage this macabre operation. There were many of those who dreaded for the fate of loved ones who'd been arrested by the NKVD. Once in a while someone would make a mournful shriek and pronounce the name of the recognized victim, maybe their father, husband, brother, sister, or cousin. Some would quietly shed their tears, as if they had expected this to happen, and slowly walk toward the almost unrecognizable body and just stare at it as if in a trance. The others would cry loudly and fall on their knees near the swollen bodies. Those who found their loved ones were allowed by the Germans to take the remains for burial. From the sympathetic crowd bitter remarks were heard.

"Before leaving town those mad NKVD dogs killed them all."

“They didn’t want to leave anybody alive.”

“No wonder,” an answer was heard. “Don’t you know the Bolsheviks’ motto that says, ‘*It’s better to have one hundred innocents shot, than one ‘enemy of the people’ left alive!*’”

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1. See the chapter “Three Days of Anarchy.”
 2. An embroidered towel.
 3. “Welcome.”
 4. “Thank you very much.”



Epilogue

By Olga Gladky Verro

Our family, as did the rest of the population, had to make a difficult decision that could influence the rest of our lives: should we remain loyal to the Soviet government, or should we consider Germans as our liberators from the oppressive Communist regime and Stalin's bloody dictatorship?

It appears that the Soviet Army was caught by complete surprise when the Germans marched everywhere across the border and proceeded to move quickly eastwards—in three months they took the whole Ukraine, Belarus, and a large part of Russia.

The Soviet Army continued to retreat east. The factories were dismantled, and the equipment was shipped behind the Ural Mountains. Most Communist Party bosses and secret police agents evacuated with their families and for a good reason—fear for their life. But it was not clear why many Jewish families evacuated, too. The priority for the transportation was to move as much of the machinery and the equipment from the factories to use in the interior and to evacuate the loyal subjects, therefore, common citizens could not even dream to get on the trains.

For the first time in the Soviet Union, the government left the common folks without forcing them to follow any orders—everyone had been left to make their own decisions. The majority of people remained in their homes—some were seeking the security of having a roof over their heads and protecting their hard-earned possessions; some were hoping that they finally would be free from the political persecutions by Bolshevik watchdogs; some Ukrainian nationalists expected to have an independent Ukraine; and many were just hoping that destiny or God would help them survive the war. But the rumors were that some Party and *Komsomol* members were ordered to remain underground to work in secret partisan cells.

No one could anticipate how much territory the Germans

intended to conquer. No one could predict who would win the war. No one knew what the occupiers intended to do with Ukraine and with its people. There were all kinds of rumors and no facts about the Nazi German invaders that could help the people make the right decision. People knew enough about the Bolshevik regime and its rulers, but nothing was known about Nazi Germany and their leaders. The only thing people knew for sure, from years of experience, was that Soviet newspapers were always printing only lies about them, lies, lies and more lies...

One thing was clear—Germans were now in command—and to survive, the people had to follow the rules given by the *Kommandant*.

The family odyssey continues under the German occupation in the upcoming sequel book: **In the Fury of War: Occupied Ukraine—Book Two of *Historical Family Memoirs*.**



Appendix

Documents with Translations

Note: Documents are listed by the chapter name in sequence of the Table of Contents.

The Matchmaking

ВЫПИСЬ					
из Метрической книги, Харьковской епархии, города Славянского, Троицкой церкви за тысячу <u>Лавриновича</u> <u>Гавриила</u> <u>Даниловича</u> <u>Березного</u> <u>1895</u> года, о рождении и крещении <u>Антонины</u> <u>Гавриловны</u> <u>Березной</u>					
Метрической книги за <u>1903</u> год, часть первая, о рождении					
Имя, фамилия, отчество и фамилия родителей	Завис, или, отчество и фамилия родителей	Имя, фамилия, отчество и фамилия родителей	Имя, фамилия, отчество и фамилия родителей	Имя, фамилия, отчество и фамилия родителей	Имя, фамилия, отчество и фамилия родителей
<u>Гавриил</u> <u>Данилович</u> <u>Березной</u>	<u>Наталья</u> <u>Григорьевна</u> <u>Березная</u>	<u>Антонина</u> <u>Гавриловна</u> <u>Березная</u>	<u>Гавриил</u> <u>Данилович</u> <u>Березной</u>	<u>Наталья</u> <u>Григорьевна</u> <u>Березная</u>	<u>Антонина</u> <u>Гавриловна</u> <u>Березная</u>
Выписано из, само в одно составлено из Метрической книги, Харьковской епархии, города Славянского, Троицкой церкви за тысячу <u>Лавриновича</u> <u>Гавриила</u> <u>Даниловича</u> <u>Березного</u> <u>1895</u> года, о рождении и крещении <u>Антонины</u> <u>Гавриловны</u> <u>Березной</u>					
Город Славянский <u>Священник</u> <u>Михаил</u> <u>Антонин</u>					
Троицкой Церкви: <u>Псаломщик</u> <u>Василий</u> <u>Давыдов</u>					

Birth and Christening Certificate

Antonina Gavriyllovna Berezhnaya, Born February 23, 1895 and Christened on February 26, 1895. Parents: Father Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy, Mother Nataliya Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya.

Copy No. 264. Issued on May 5, 1903 by the Register of Births of Trinity Church, Kharkovsky Eparchy, Town of Slavyansk, Kharkovsky Province, Russia.

Kharkovsky Street

Attestat

АТТЕСТАТЪ.

Предъявительница сего, ученица седьмого класса Славянской Женской Гимназии

Березная Антонина Гавриловна, какъ видно изъ документовъ, дочь *мещанина*

исповѣданія *православнаго*, имѣющая отъ роду *18* лѣтъ, поступила по *зачисленію въ классы* въ *классъ* Славянской Женской Гимназии *1 августа 1903 г.* и, находясь въ ней до окончанія полнаго курса ученія, въ продолженіе всего этого времени вела себя отлично и была переводима, по испытаніямъ, въ слѣдующіе классы: а именно: изъ *предподготовит.* *кл. въ I кл. въ 1905 г.*; въ *II кл. въ 1906 г.*; въ *III кл. въ 1907 г.*; въ *IV кл. въ 1908 г.*; въ *V кл. въ 1909 г.*; въ *VI классъ въ 1910 году*; въ *VII классъ въ 1911 году* и награ-
дой 1-й степени.

Въ настоящемъ году, при окончаніи курса гимназій, познанія ея въ обязательныхъ предметахъ были аттестованы слѣдующими баллами:

- | | | |
|---|----------------|-----|
| 1) Въ Законѣ Божіемъ | <i>отлично</i> | (5) |
| 2) „ Русскомъ языкѣ съ церковно-славянскимъ и словесности | <i>хорошо</i> | (4) |
| 3) „ Математикѣ | <i>отлично</i> | (5) |
| 4) „ Географіи всеобщей и русской | <i>отлично</i> | (5) |
| 5) „ Естественной исторіи | <i>отлично</i> | (5) |
| 6) „ Исторіи всеобщей и русской | <i>хорошо</i> | (4) |
| 7) „ Физикѣ и математической и физической географіи | <i>отлично</i> | (5) |

Изъ этихъ сихъ предметовъ получила въ общемъ среднемъ выводѣ отбѣтку *4,71 (сорокѣ и семьдесятъ одна сотая)*

Затѣмъ чистовисанію обучалась съ *отличными (5)* успѣхами и рукодѣлію съ *отличными (5)* успѣхами.

Сверхъ того, изъ необязательныхъ предметовъ гимназическаго курса, она обуча-
лась: педагогикѣ съ *отличными (5)* успѣхами, французскому языку съ *хорошими (4)* успѣхами, нѣмецкому языку съ *хорошими (4)* успѣхами и рисованію съ _____ успѣхами.

Attestat Slavyansk Women's Gymnasium, pg. 1

Awarded to Berezhnaya Antonina Gavriylovna, 18 years old, a daughter of bourgeois, Orthodox Christian. Enrolled according to exams in a Lower Preparatory Class of Slavyansk Women's Gymnasium on August 14, 1903 and attended until the end of the course of studies with excellent behavior and was promoted: from the Preparatory Class to the 1st Class in 1905, to the 2nd Class in

1906, to the 3rd Class in 1907, to the 4th Class in 1908, to the 5th Class in 1909, to the 6th Class in 1910, to the 7th Class in 1911, with excellent behavior, and with the First level of Distinction.

In the present year at the completion of the course in Gymnasium, her knowledge in the required courses was registered with the following grades:

1. Religion—Excellent;
2. Russian Language and Literature, with the Church Slavonic—Good;
3. Mathematics—Excellent;
4. Geography of the World and Russian Geography—Excellent;
5. Natural Sciences—Excellent;
6. World History and Russian History—Good;
7. Physics, and Mathematical and Physical Geography—Excellent.

From all courses she received the 4.71 grade-average in the required subjects.

She also studied:

1. Calligraphy—Excellent;
2. Needlecrafts—Excellent.

In addition to the required subjects, she studied other courses:

1. Pedagogy—Excellent;
2. French—Good;
3. German—Good
4. Drawing—not evaluated.

Att. No. 296. Pg.1

Ministry of People's Education of 1870, she deserves to receive a Distinction of Silver Medal. In confirmation of this she, Antonina Berezhnaya, receives this Attestat according to a decision of the Pedagogical Council of Slavyansk Women's Gymnasium held on June 5, 1913. Slavyansk, Kharkovsky Province, June 8, 1913.

(Seal. Signatures of the Gymnasium Headmistress, Secretary and members of the Pedagogical Council.) Att. No. 296 Pg.2.

Students in Kharkov



Certificate from Pedagogical Courses of New Languages M. A. Stats

Presenter of this, Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya, of bourgeoisie class, and of Orthodox Christian Faith, a graduate of the Slavyansk First Women's Gymnasium and the bearer of the Certificate of completion of Pedagogical Courses of New Languages M. A. Stats in Kharkov where she was a student from September 10, 1914 to May 1918.

The Courses were designed according to the plan of theoretical and practical studies as a preparation for teaching French Language as established according to the Article Leg. Pg. 2095 and confirmed by the Ministry of People's Education special rule, sec. 6, statute of July 3, 1914.

Antonina G. Berezhnaya passed the exams by the examination committee and has demonstrated the following achievements: In the General Subjects: Logics—*Very Satisfactory*; Psychology—*Very Satisfactory*; Pedagogy and History of Pedagogic Studies—*Very Satisfactory*; School Hygiene—*Very Satisfactory*. In the selected Special Subjects: French Contemporary and Historical Grammar—*Satisfactory*; French Literature—*Satisfactory*; Methodology of Teaching Contemporary Languages—*Very Satisfactory*. In addition to these subjects, she attended the Course in History of Universal Literature and Latin Languages.

On account of this examination and of Article 2 of the Rules sec. 6, it grants her, Berezhnoy, after she presents a Certificate from a superintendent of one of the

(Seal. Signatures of Examination Committee Chairman and Office Director.)
May, 31, 1918. No. 29/16.

[illegible]

Contract for Purchase of a House
Notary Page 2 (Cont. from Pg 1, No. 3)

This house was previously notarized as No. 1431 on November 25, 1933 and registered at Komunhosp as a private owned house under No. 95 on November 28, 1933.

4. House described above is free of any kind of loans, arrest, confiscation, and is not under any kind of agreement, down-payment, etc., and also it does have any other rights of home-property transfer according to the recorded document in Slavyansk Towncomunkhos. August 11, 1938, No. 103.

5. Evaluation of the house established by the State at 10,621.00 Krb, as P. 3,581.00 by Townkhos. The expenses of the Agreement to be paid by the buyer, Gladkaya.

6. Official addresses of the persons who made this Contract: Ivanova, Slavyansk, 78 Young Communars Str.; Gladkaya, Slavyansk, 12 Kalinin St. In the Contract are added "all," cancelled "to be used." Conf. Maria Nikolayevna Ivanova and Antonina Gavriylovna Gladkaya.

August, 3 (8/3), 1938. Officially notarized document by the State Office Notary.

Tax paid: Ninety-eight (98.00) Krb. Government established cost for transaction.

State Notary Seal and Notary signature.

Registered as No. 316 on 8/26/38. Signature of Townkhos Manager.

Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, August 26, 1938.



СТАЛІНСЬКИЙ ОБЛАСНИЙ ВИКОНАВЧИЙ КОМІТЕТ
РАД РОБІТНИЧИХ, СЕЛЯНСЬКИХ ТА ЧЕРВОНОАРМІЙСЬКИХ ДЕПУТАТІВ

Місто Сталіно, Будівня Рад

300.25.U.139u.

ПОСТАНОВА

Прот. М-197 п.34

ПРЕЗИДІУ СТАЛІНСЬКОГО ОБЛАСНОГО ВИКОНАВЧОГО КОМІТЕТУ

"Об отделении участка гр. ГЛАДКАЯ А.Г. в г. Славянске"

(Т.Т. Драбкин, Гладкая, Васс, Гордийенко, Ренетник)

1. Постановление президиума Сталинского городского совета от 7.7.39г (прот. №-16) о полном отчуждении фрукт. сада находящегося в пользовании гр. ГЛАДКАЯ для расширения двора школы №-6, отменить как противоречащую постановлению СНК СССР от 17.11.27 года о размере денационализированных земель в городах.

2. В связи с тем, что сад находился в пользовании гр. Гладкой ранее 3476 кв. мет., а постановлением СНК СССР - размер сада не должен в пользовании граждан в городах не может превышать 1820 кв. мет., - разрешение Сталинскому городскому совету предоставить у гр. ГЛАДКОЙ отчужденные площади сада в размере 1866 кв. мет., доводя оставшуюся площадь до нормы установленной Правительством.

В границах отчужденной части сада в количестве 1556 кв. мет. присоединить к территории школы №-6.

3. В связи с тем, что гр. ГЛАДКАЯ произвела затраты на постройку кирпичного забора, возместить последний отчужденный участок по государственной цене за подлежащий отчуждению забор.

4. Указать Зав. Сталинским Горкомхозом на точность в 1000 кв. мет. в размере сада, находящегося в пользовании гр. ГЛАДКОЙ. Обязать Зав. Горкомхозом проверить размер площадей садов в городе Славянске, находящихся у частных граждан.

Н. С. ГЛАДКАЯ, ЗАВ. РАЙОНЫ СЛАВЯНСКОГО

(РЕШЕНИЕ)

Н. С. ГЛАДКАЯ, ЗАВ. РАЙОНЫ СЛАВЯНСКОГО

(РЕШЕНИЕ)

Разослано: 1. Сталинскому городскому совету, Облкомхозу и гр. Гладкой.

Секретарь: М. 1301.

Resolution of Presidium of Stalino's Provincial Executive Committee About the Detachment of Land from the Parcel in Use by A. G. Gladkaya in the Town of Slavyansk, 5/7/39.

Stalinsky Regional Executive Committee of Workers, Peasants and Red Army Deputies

Town of Stalino House of the Soviets

300.25.U.139u. Prot.M-197 p.34.

Resolution by the Presidium of Stalinsky's Regional Executive Committee "About alienation of land used by Citizen Gladkaya A. G. in the town of Slavyansk"

(T. T. Drabkin, Gladkaya, Vass, Gordiyenko, Renetnik)

1. Resolution by the Presidium of Stalinsky Town Soviet of 7.U.39u. (prot.No.16) about the complete alienation of fruit garden used by the citizen Gladkaya to enlarge the size of courtyard of School No. 6. To be alienated as being contrary to the resolution of SNK USSR of 17.P.27 year about the sizes of the re-nationalized properties in Towns.

2. On the basis that the garden in use by the citizen Gladkaya is 3,476 sq. meters, and by the Resolution SNK USSR, the land used by the citizens in towns cannot exceed 1,820 sq. meters—to allow Slavyansk Town Soviet to execute the

alienation of garden part in size of 1656 sq meters, bringing the remaining land to the norm established by the Government. The alienated garden part in the size of 1,656 sq meters add to the land of School No. 6.

3. Considering that citizen Gladkaya had spent the money building the brick fence, to compensate her for the cost of the fence according to the state evaluation of the part belonging to the alienated land.

4. Point out to the Manager of the *Slavyansk Gorcomkhos* about the difference of 1,000 sq meters in measurement of the size of the garden in use by citizen Gladkaya. And order the *Slavyansk Gorcomkhos* Manager to check the sizes of the gardens that are in use by the private citizens in the Town of Slavyansk.

(Stalinsky Regional Executive Committee Seal. Signatures of the Committee members.) June 25, 1939.

The Last Year of School

(Герб УРСР)
УРСР

Кенія

Народный Комиссариат Просвещения
Аттестат

выдан настоящий аттестат Гладкой
Ольге Орестовне,
родившейся в 1923 году в том, что она
обучалась в 15-ой средней школе
поселка Славыанска, Славыанского района
Сталинской области, окончившей полный
курс этой школы и обнаружившей при окончании
поведения следующие знания:

По украинскому языку хорошо	По географии отлично
По украинской литературе отлично	По физике отлично
По русскому языку хорошо	По химии хорошо
По русской литературе отлично	По истории и географии хорошо
По арифметике отлично	По астрономии хорошо
По алгебре отлично	По иностранному языку (нем) хорошо
По геометрии отлично	По рисованию
По тригонометрии отлично	По черчению хорошо
По естественным наукам хорошо	По пению
По истории отлично	По физкультуре
По Конституции СССР и УССР отлично	По военному делу отлично

№ 6

23 июня 1940 г.

(подпись)

Директор школы /Маликова/
Учитель: /С. Кенариков/
/А. Шендеров/

м.п. Слободяк

USSR People's Commissariat of Education

Attestat

(A copy of Ten-Years-School Diploma)

Issued to Olga Orestovna Gladkaya, born in 1923, to certify that she studied at the Ten-Years-School No. 15 in the Town of Slavyansk, Slavyansk District, Stalin'sky Region, finished the complete course of this school and demonstrated with the excellent behavior knowledge in the following subjects with the grades:

Ukrainian Language—Good; Ukrainian Literature—Excellent;

Russian Language—Good; Russian Literature—Excellent;

Arithmetic—Excellent; Algebra—Excellent;

Geometry and Trigonometry—Excellent; Science—Good;

History and USSR Constitution—Excellent; Geography—Excellent;

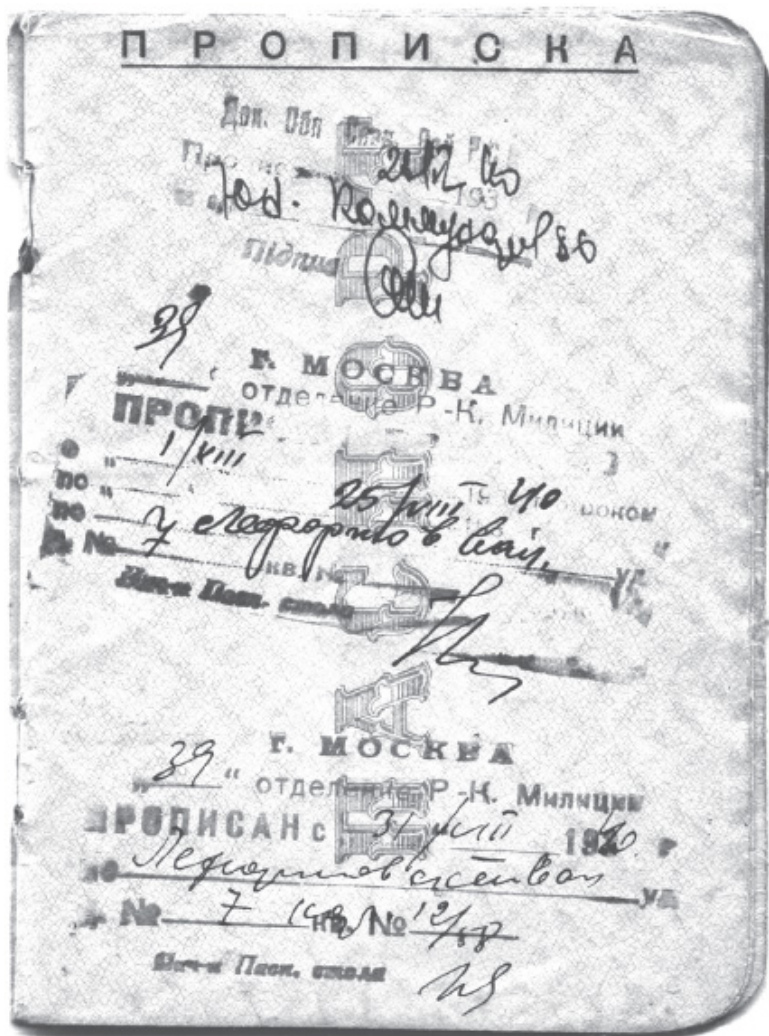
Physics—Excellent; Chemistry—Good; Drafting—Good;

Notarized: Notary Seal No. 6, June 23, 1940. Town of Slavyansk, (Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union.)



Passport PF No. 600526. Valid until May 26, 1945. Name: Olga Orestovna Gladkaya; Birthday: 1/14/1923; Place of Birth: City of Stalino; Nationality: Russian; Occupation: Student. Slavyansk, Stalinsky Region, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union. Issued by 1st Department of RKM NKVD, Stalinsky Region.

Based on a copy of Birth Certificate No. 86. May 26, 1940.



Olga Orestovna Gladkaya Passport (Pg. 3)

Residency Registration:

26/5/40, 86 Young Communars Street (Slavyansk, Donetsk Region.)

1/8/40, Lefortovsky Val, 7, Moscow, Department R-K Militia.

31/8/40, Lefortovsky Val, 7, 12-58, Moscow, Department R-K Militia.

9. Кем выдан паспорт *1-й отд. Сталинской*

РКМ НКВД
Сталинской обл

10. На основании каких документов выдан паспорт

Выписка о рождении
№ 86



Исполнитель Р.-К. милиции

[Signature]

Нач. паспортного стола -

[Signature]

Дата выдачи

26 мая 1940

ПФ № 600526

Olga Orestovna Gladkaya Passport (Pg. 2.)

9. Issued by the 1st Department of RKM NKVD, Stalinsky Region;

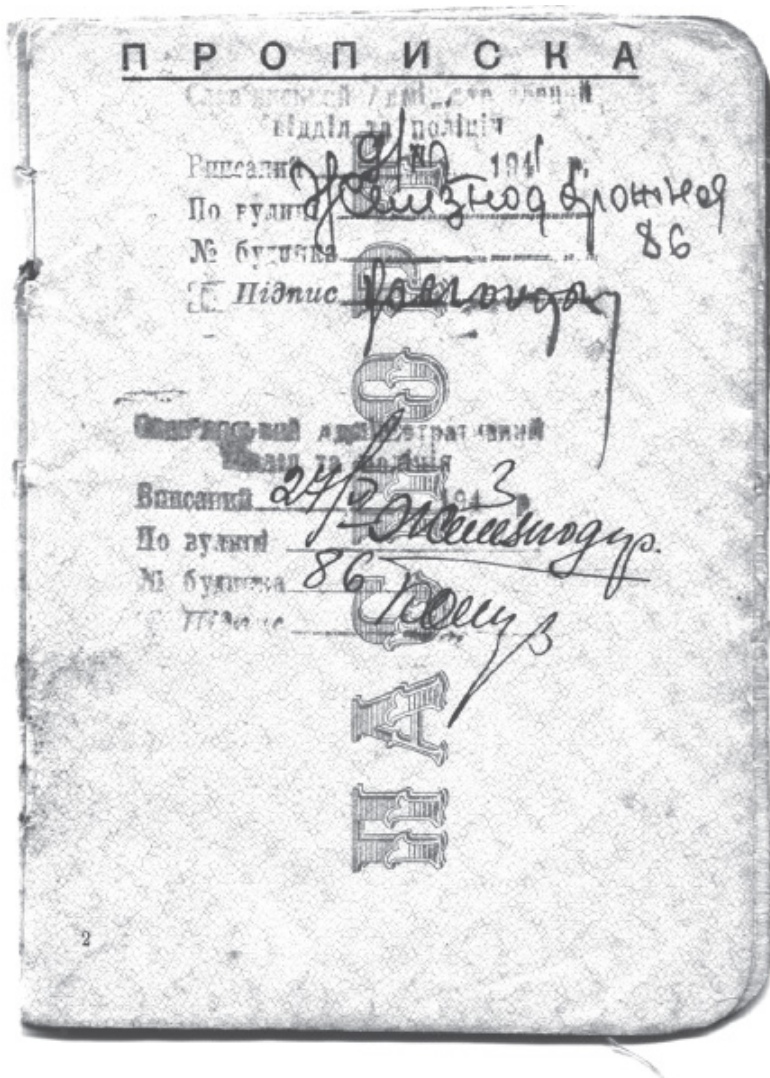
Based on Birth Certificate No. 86. May 26, 1940.

(Photo)

(Official's signatures and Seal.)

Issued on May 26, 1940.

PF No. 600526



Olga Orestovna Gladkaya Passport (Pg. 5.)

Residency Registration 7/9/1941: 86 Railroad Street. (Slavyansk, Ukraine under German occupation.)

Residency Registration 27/5/1943: 86 Railroad St. (Slavyansk, Ukraine under German occupation).

1. Внутренний листок является пропуском, на испытаниях, без представления его к испытаниям не допускается.
2. Расписание испытаний, составлено на основании порядкового номера экзамена национального листа.
3. Не аттестованные правительством листы должны быть возвращены в приемную комиссию.
4. По возвращении этого листа, принятый в учебное заведение получает студенческое удостоверение.
5. На основании в учебное заведение получает обратно свой документ.
6. Без своих листы документы не возвращаются.

№	№	Дого	Зачетная мг	Заче- ты формы	Оцен- ка	Подпись наставни- ка
1			МОНЕ- МОНУ- МОН	МОНУМ	Омн	В.П.П.
				МОНУМ	Омн	В.П.П.
2			ФЕДЕРА- ЦИОН	ФЕДЕРА-	Хеп	
				ФЕДЕРА-	Хеп	Л.П.П.
3			ФЕДЕРА- ЦИОН	ФЕДЕРА-	Омн	В.П.П.
4			ИМАМУ	ИМАМУ	Хеп	В.П.П.
5			ИМАМУ ИМАМУ ИМАМУ	ИМАМУ	Хеп	В.П.П.
6			ИМАМУ ИМАМУ	ИМАМУ	100	В.П.П.

(Photo, Official Seal.) Personal signature: (Gladkaya, Olga Orestovna.)

СССР — ПКСО
Московский Энергетический Институт
имени В. М. Молотова

Студенческий билет № 2349

Фамилия Гладкая
Имя Ольга
Отчество Орестовна
Время поступления Сентябрь 1940г.
Факультет Э. П. Ф.

Директор института [Signature]
Билет действителен до 7/II-41г.
Дата выдачи билета 28/VI-40г.

Место печати
169
1940

[Signature]
(Подпись директора)

Срок действия билета продлен до 15/II-41
М. П. [Signature]
Директор

Студент _____
переведен на _____ курс.
Срок действия билета продлен до _____
М. П. _____
Директор _____

Срок действия билета продлен до _____
М. П. _____
Директор _____

Студент _____
переведен на _____ курс.
Срок действия билета продлен до _____
М. П. _____
Директор _____

USSR—PCHE, Moscow Power Institute, in the name of V.M. Molotov
Student Card #2349

Last Name: Gladkaya; First Name: Olga; Patronymic Name: Orestovna;

Entrance time: September, 1940; Faculty: E. P. F. (student of Electric Power Faculty)

(Director of the Institute Signature); Card valid until 7/II-41; Card issued: 29/VIII-40.

(Institute's Seal)

(Olga Gladkaya photo, Signature, and Institute's Seal)

Validity of the Card extended until 28/x-41.

Студенты обязаны сдавать экзамены за полный курс каждого предмета и зачеты по практическим занятиям. Экзамены принимаются только профессорами, доцентами и старшими преподавателями, а зачеты также ассистентами и преподавателями.

Каждому студенту выдается единый студенческий билет и единый матрикул (зачетная книжка). В матрикул записываются все предметы, обязательные для прохождения и оценки по экзаменам и зачетам. Оценки в матрикуле проставляются лицами, производившими экзамены и принимавшими зачеты.

Успеваемость студентов определяется следующими степенями оценок (отметок): 1) „отлично“, 2) „хорошо“, 3) „посредственно“, 4) „неудовлетворительно“.

Из типового устава Высшего учебного заведения, утвержденного СНК СССР 5 сентября 1938 г.

Место печати

Личная подпись студента

Владаря

НКТП—СССР

МОСКОВСКИЙ ЭНЕРГЕТИЧЕСКИЙ ИНСТИТУТ
ИМ. В. М. МОЛОТОВА

ЗАЧЕТНАЯ КНИЖКА № 2349

Фамилия, имя и отчество Гладкая Ольга Орестовна

Факультет Электрoэнергетический

Поступил (переведен) на 1 курс

Зам. директора по учебной части

Декан факультета

Дата выдачи зачетной книжки

НКТП – USSR
Moscow Power Institute
In the Name of V. M. Molotov

Moscow Power Institute Examination Register # 2349.
Olga Orestovna Gladkaya; First Year student; First Semester, 1940.
(Photo; Student's Signature; Seal.) (Title page and pg. 1.)

1-й семестр 1940-41 учебного года					
ПЕРВЫЙ					
Теоретический курс					
№	Наименование дисциплины	Кол. часов	Фамилия профессора или доцента	Зачеты, отбиты	Дата сдачи экзамена
1	Высшая математика	125	Бессонов	кар	24/11
2	Физика	85	Григорьев	Вана	7.1.41
3	Высшая геометрия	85	Григорьев	Вана	7.1.41
4	Химия				
5	Черчение				
6	Физическое воспитание				
7	История				
8	Литература				

КУРС					
2.10.1940 г. д.с.					
(фамилия, и. о. студента)					
Практические занятия					
№	Наименование дисциплины	Кол. часов	Фамилия преподавателя	Отметка о занятии	Дата сдачи экзамена
1	Высшая математика	68			
2	Физика	34			
3	Высшая геометрия	34			
4	Химия	17			
5	Черчение	51			
6	Физическое воспитание	34			
7	История				
8	Литература				

2-й семестр 1941 учебного года					
ПЕРВЫЙ					
Теоретический курс					
№	Наименование дисциплины	Кол. часов	Фамилия профессора или доцента	Зачеты, отбиты	Дата сдачи экзамена
1	Высшая математика		Григорьев	Карманы	31/12
2	Физика		Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
3	Высшая геометрия		Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
4	Химия		Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
5	Черчение		Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
6	Физическое воспитание		Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
7	История		Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
8	Литература		Бессонов	Карманы	31/12

КУРС					
2.10.1941 г. д.с.					
(фамилия, и. о. студента)					
Практические занятия					
№	Наименование дисциплины	Кол. часов	Фамилия преподавателя	Отметка о занятии	Дата сдачи экзамена
1	Высшая математика	16	Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
2	Физика	8	Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
3	Высшая геометрия	8	Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
4	Химия	4	Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
5	Черчение	16	Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
6	Физическое воспитание	8	Бессонов	Карманы	31/12
7	История				
8	Литература				

Examination Register Book—Matriculation Book (Pgs. 3-6.)

Olga Orestovna Gldkaya;

Moscow Power Institute, Electric Power Department.

1st Semester Theory Courses, hours and grades:

Higher Mathematics: 125 hrs—*Excellent*;

Physics: 85 hrs—*Good*; Higher Geometry: 85 hrs—*Excellent*.

1st Semester Practical Classes. Marxism-Leninism: 68 hrs; German Language: 68 hrs;

Physics: 34 hrs; Chemistry: 17 hrs; Drafting 51 hrs; Physical Education 34 hrs.

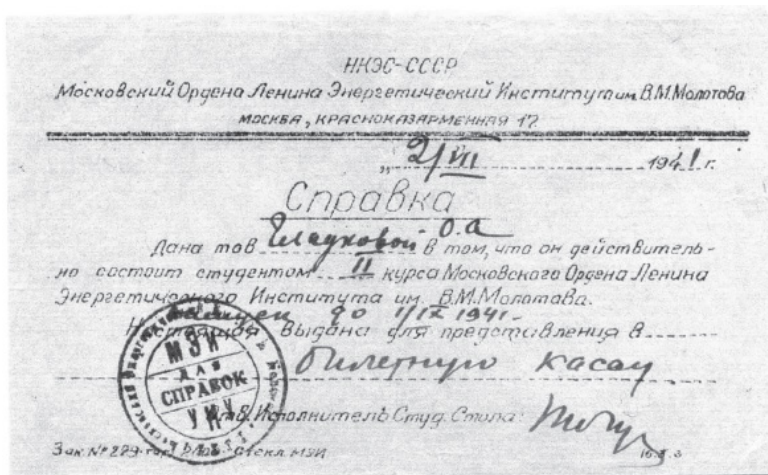
2nd Semester Theory Courses, hours and grades: German—*Good*;

Marxism-Leninism—*Good*; Theoretical Mechanics—*Good*; Mathematics—*Excellent*; Chemistry—*Good*; Physics—*Excellent*.

2nd Semester Practical Classes: Physics: 16 hrs—*Passed*; Chemistry—*Passed*; Drafting—*Excellent*; Drawing—*Passed*.

Moscow Power Institute, in the name of V. M. Molotov, Moscow, Soviet Union, 1940-1941.

Twenty-Second of June 1941



HKES – USSR

Order of Lenin, Moscow Power Institute, in the name of V. M. Molotov Certificate

Krasnokazarmennaya Street, 17, Moscow, July 2, 1941.

Issued to certify that O. O. Gladkaya, is a second-year student of Moscow, Order of Lenin, Power Institute, in the name of V. M. Molotov, is on vacation until 9/1/1941.

Certificate issued for the Railroad Ticket Office.

Reference to Russian Names

Russian last name or family name for women is gender defined and spelled differently from the male last name. In *Historical Family Memoirs*, when the Russian woman lived in countries where gender-defined names are not used, the names are taking the father's or husband's family name spelling. In this reference, the alternative names are included in parentheses; and maiden names for married women are listed.

Nickname may change when used by different people and in different countries, and it is included in parentheses. The nicknames are commonly used for children and adults in the family and with close friends or among lower-rank folks and peasants.

The names are listed by: first name or given name, (nickname), patronymic (derived from the father's first name) and sometimes used only as an initial; family name or last name; maiden name for married women; and nickname.

Family relationship references include: father, mother, daughter, son, grandfather, grandmother, granddaughter, grandson, aunt, uncle, cousin, niece, nephew, etc.

To better grasp all the complexities of the Russian names, here is a sample of all variants for **Antonina G. Gladky**:

Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky)

(nicknames: **Tonya**, **Tonyechka**, **Tonik**)—full name that includes all variants;

Antonina—**first or given name**—registered in all documents before and after marriage and in all countries;

Tonya—**nickname**—used by family members and close friends;

Tonyechka—endearing nickname—used by family members and close friends;

Tonik—endearing nickname—used by her husband.

Gavriylovna, or initial **G.**—Russian gender-defined patronymic name based on her father's first name, **Gavriyl**; it is used in all Russian documents and as an initial "G." in place of a middle

name in countries that don't use patronymic names;

Berezhnaya—Russian gender-defined family name based on her father's last name, **Berezhnoy**, it is also her maiden name when listed for the married woman;

Gladkaya—Russian gender-defined family name or last name of a married woman based on her husband's last name, **Gladky**;

Gladky—last name of a married woman taken on her husband's name spelling in the countries that don't use gender-defined names: Germany, England, Italy, and United States;

All References to relationships of **Antonina Gavriylovna**

Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky): daughter of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosyfovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; wife of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; mother of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky); sister of all brothers and sisters; teacher of Nikita Khrushchev.

Glossary of Names

Note: All names are listed in alphabetical order. To find a reference to the name, search by: first name, patronymic name, last name, and nickname.

Alexandr Gavriylovich Berezhnoy (nickname **Shura**)—son of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosyfovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; brother of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky).

Alfred Igorevich Gladki (Gladky) (by adoption), **Borisov** (by birth), (nickname **Fredik**)—son of Antonina Yulyevna (Yuliusovna) Gauk Gladky; adopted son of Igor Mikhailovich Gladky (Gladki); husband of Varya Gladki; brother of Nadyezhda Igorevna Gladkaya; brother of Igor Igorevich Gladki; nephew of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya (nickname **Nyusya**)—daughter of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosyfovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; mother of Vitaly Berezhnoy (nickname **Talik**); mother of Svetlana Nikolayevna Bereschnaya; sister of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky), aunt of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Anna Mikhaylovna Gladkaya (nickname **Any**a)—daughter of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky and Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich Gladkaya; sister of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; sister-in-law of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); aunt of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky) (nickname **Tonya**)—daughter of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosyfovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; wife of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; mother of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Antonina Gavriylovna Gladkaya (Gladky)—teacher of Nikita Khrushchev.

Antonina Yulyevna (Yuliusovna) Gauk Gladkaya (Gladki)

(nickname **Tosia**)—wife of Igor Mikhailovich Gladky; mother of Alfred Gladki, Nadyezhda Igorevna Gladky, Igor Igorevich Gladki (Gladky).

Anya—nickname of Anna Mikhaylovna Gladky—daughter of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky and Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich Gladkaya; sister of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; sister-in-law of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); aunt of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Babushka—**Eva Yakovlyevna Svirbul Gauk**—Mother of Antonina Yulyevna (Yuliusovna) Gauk Gladki; Mother-in-law of Igor Mikhailovich Gladky (Gladki); Grandmother of Alfred Igorevich Gladki (Gladky) and Igor Igorevich Gladki.

Bonifaty Bonifatyevich Yuryevich—son of Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Yuryevich and Bonyfaty Yuryevich; father of Konstantin Bonifatyevich Yurevich and Lyudmila Bonifatyevna Yuryevich; brother of Maria Bonifatyevna Yuryevich (Marusya); nephew of Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Gladkaya; first cousin of Orest M. Gladky.

Bonifaty Ustinovich Yuryevich—Husband of Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Yuryevich; Father of Bonifaty Bonifatyevich Yuryevich and Maria Bonifatyevna Yuryevich.

Dima—nickname of Dmitriy Karklin—Olga's college friend at Moscow Power Institute, Moscow, Soviet Union.

Dmitriy Karklin (nickname **Dima**)—Olga's college friend at Moscow Power Institute, Moscow, Soviet Union.

Efim Zusmanovich (nicknames **Fima**, **Fimka**)—Olga's schoolmate and friend in Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk, Ukrainian SSR and college friend at Moscow Power Institute, Moscow, Soviet Union.

Ekaterina Iosifovna Grechko Berezhnaya (nickname **Katya**)—wife of Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy; mother of Nikolay Nikolayevich Berezhnoy and Vladimir Nikolayevich Berezhnoy (Wladimir Nikolayevich Bereschnoy in Canadian and German documents).

Fima, **Fimka**—nicknames of Efim Zusmanovich—Olga's schoolmate and friend in Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk, Ukrainian SSR and college friend at Moscow Power Institute, Moscow, Soviet Union.

Fredik—nickname of Alfred Igorevich Gladki; son of Antonina Yulyevna (Yuliusovna) Gauk Gladky; adopted son of Igor Mikhailovich Gladky; brother of Nadyezhda Igorevna Gladky and Igor Igorevich Gladki (Gladky); nephew of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Fyedor Iosifovich Grudzinsky—brother of Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; father of Yekaterina Fyedorovna Grudzinskaya; uncle of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky).

Feodor Iosifovich Sokolovsky—husband of Vera Mikhailovna Gladkaya Sokolovskaya; father of Svetlana Fedorovna Sokolovskaya.

Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy (nickname **Gavryusha**)—son of Danil Berezhnoy and Anna Berezhnaya); husband of Natalia Iosyfovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; father of: Alexandr Gavriylovich Berezhnoy, Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy, Tatyana Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Tatarskaya, Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky), Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya, Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy, Olga Gavriylovna Berezhnaya, Natalia Berezhnaya, Pyetr Gavriylovich Berezhnoy; grandfather of: Nikolay Nikolayevich Berezhnoy, Vladimir Nikolayevich Berezhnoy (Wladimir Nikolayevich Bereschnoy in Canada), Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro); Marianna Solomonovna Tatarskaya Naygovzina, Yelena Ivanovna Berezhnaya Mikailova.

Gavryusha—nickname of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy.

Giulio Verro—husband of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro); Airman in Italian Air Force in WW2; Italian prisoner of war in Nazi Germany; (nickname **Giulyen'ka**, **Giul'ka**).

Igor Igorevich Gladki—son of Antonina Yulyevna (Yuliusovna) Gauk Gladky and Igor Mikhailovich Gladky (Gladki); husband of Dinara Gladki; brother of Nadyezhda Igorevna Gladkaya; brother of Alfred Gladki; nephew of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Igor Mikhailovich Gladky (nickname **Igoryek**)—son of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky and Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich Gladkaya; brother of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; husband of Antonina Yulyevna (Yuliusovna) Gauk Gladky;

father (by adoption) of Alfred Igorevich Gladky; father of Nadyezhda Igorevna Gladky and Igor Igorevich Gladki; brother-in-law of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); uncle of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Igoryek—nickname of Igor Mikhailovich Gladky.

Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy (nickname **Vanya**)—son of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosyfovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; husband of Maria Fedorovna Dyeryughina Berezhnaya; father of Yelena Ivanovna Berezhnaya; brother of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); uncle of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Kolya—nickname of Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy—son of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosyfovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; husband of Ekaterina Iosifovna Grechko Berezhnaya; father of Nikolay Nikolayevich Berezhnoy and Vladimir Nikolayevich Berezhnoy (Wladimir Bereschnoy in Canada); brother of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); uncle of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Konstantin Bonifatyevich Yurevich (nickname **Kotik**)—son of Bonifaty Bonifatyevich Yuryevich; grandson of Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Yuryevich; second cousin of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; second cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Konstantin Syrota (nickname **Kostya**)—Olga's best friend at Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union.

Kostya—nickname of **Konstantin Syrota**—Olga's best friend at Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union.

Kotik—nickname of Konstantin Bonifatyevich Yurevich—son of Bonifaty Bonifatyevich Yuryevich; grandson of Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Yuryevich; second cousin of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; second cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Kotik—nickname of Nikolay Nikolayevich Berezhnoy—son of Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy and Ekaterina Iosifovna Grechko Berezhnaya; grandson of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy; nephew of Antonina Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Lala—Italian nickname of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Lyalya, Lyalyechka, Lyal'ka—nicknames of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro); daughter of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky and Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); granddaughter of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy.

Lyalya, Lena—nicknames of Yelena Ivanovna Berezhnaya Mikailova—daughter of Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy and Maria Fedorovna Dyeryughina; mother of Edward Mikailov.

Lyudmila Bonifatyevna Yuryevich—daughter of Bonifaty Bonifatyevich Yuryevich; sister of Konstantin Bonifatyevich Yurevich; granddaughter of Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Yuryevich; second cousin of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky and Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Mama, Mamochka, Mamusya—endearing names in Russian for “mother.”

Marianna Solomonovna Tatarskaya Naygovzina (nicknames: **Murochka, Mura**)—daughter of Tatyana Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Tatarskaya and Solomon Moisyeyevich Tatarsky; niece of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Maria Bonifatyevna Yuryevich (nickname **Marusya**)—daughter of Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Yuryevich and Bonyfaty Yuryevich; sister of Bonifaty Bonifatyevich Yuryevich; aunt of Konstantin Bonifatyevich Yurevich and Lyudmila Bonifatyevna Yuryevich; niece of Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Gladkaya; first cousin of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky.

Maria Davidenko (nickname **Musya, Mukha**)—girlfriend of Olga Gladkaya in Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk, Ukrainian SSR.

Maria Fedorovna Dyeryughina Berezhnaya (nickname **Musya**)—wife of Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy; mother of Yelena Ivanovna Berezhnaya Mikailova; sister-in-law of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky).

Maria Makarovna Gladkaya Myedvyedyeva (nickname **Marusya**)—daughter of Makar Gladky and Elena Danilovna Gladkaya; wife of Nikandr Yakovlyevich Myedvyedyev; mother of two sons (names not remembered); sister of Mikhail

Makarovich Gladky; aunt of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky.

Maria Sergyeyevna Sydorenko Litvinova—Antonina G.

Gladkaya (Gladky) and her sister Tanya's girlfriend from the old days when they all attended gymnasium, and she lived almost across the street from their father's home; mother of Zoya Litinova, a school friend of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro.)

Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Yuryevich—sister of

Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Gladkaya; mother of Bonifaty Bonifatyevich Yuryevich and Maria Bonifatyevna Yurevich; grandmother of Konstantin Bonifatyevich Yurevich and Lyudmila Bonifatyevna Yuryevich; sister-in-law of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky; aunt of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky.

Marusya—nickname of **Maria Bonifatyevna Yuryevich**—

daughter of Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Yuryevich and Bonifaty Yuryevich; sister of Bonifaty Bonifatyevich Yuryevich; aunt of Konstantin Bonifatyevich Yurevich and Lyudmila Bonifatyevna Yuryevich; niece of Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Gladkaya; first cousin of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky.

Marusya—nickname of Maria Makarovna Gladky—sister of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky; wife of Nikandr Yakovlyevich Myedvyedyev; aunt of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky.

Mikhail Makarovich Gladky—son of Makar Gladky and Anna Gladkaya; husband of Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Gladkaya; father of Anna Mikhailovna Gladkaya, Orest Mikhailovich Gladky, Vera Mikhailovna Gladkaya Sokolovskaya, Igor Mikhailovich Gladky; father-in-law of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); grandfather of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro) and Svetlana Fedorovna Sokolovskaya.

Murochka, Mura—nickname of **Marianna Solomonovna**

Tatarskaya Naygovzina; daughter of Tatyana Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Tatarskaya and Solomon Moiseyevich Tatarsky; niece of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Musya—nickname of Maria Fedorovna Dyeryughina—wife of Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnaya and mother of Elena Ivanovna Berezhnaya Mikailova.

Musya, Musyenka, Mukha—nicknames of Maria Davidenko—

girlfriend of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro) at Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union.

Nadyezhda Igorevna Gladky (nicknames: **Nana**, **Nanochka**)—daughter of Igor Mikhailovich Gladky and Antonina Yulyevna (Yuliusovna) Gauk Gladky; sister of Alfred Gladki and Igor I. Gladki; niece of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich Gladkaya—wife of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky; mother of Anna Mikhailovna Gladkaya, Orest Mikhailovich Gladky, Vera Mikhailovna Gladkaya, Igor Mikhailovich Gladki; sister of Maria Vikentyevna Mikhnevich Yuryevich; grandmother of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Nanochka, **Nana**—nicknames of Nadyezhda Igorevna Gladky; daughter of Igor Mikhailovich Gladky and Antonina Yulyevna (Yuliusovna) Gauk Gladkaya (Gladki); sister of Alfred Gladki and Igor I. Gladki; niece of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Nata—nickname of a young woman companion of Orest M. Gladky in escape to Crimea during the retreat of Whites in the Russian Civil War (1920).

Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya—wife of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy; mother of Alexandr Gavriylovich Berezhnoy, Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy, Tatyana Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Tatarskaya, Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky), Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya, Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy, Olga Gavriylovna Berezhnaya, Natalia Gavriylovna Berezhnaya, Pyetr Gavriylovich Berezhnoy; grandmother of: Nikolay Nikolayevich Berezhnoy, Vladimir Nikolayevich Berezhnoy (Wladimir Nikolayevich Bereschnoy in Canada), Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro), Yelena Ivanovna Berezhnaya Mikailova, Marianna Solomonovna Tatarskaya.

Natasha—nickname of Natalia Gavriylovna Berezhnaya; daughter of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; baby sister of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky).

Nikita Khrushchev—student of Antonina Gavriylovna Gladkaya (Gladky) (1922–1924) and Premier of Soviet Union (1958–1964).

Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy (nickname **Kolya**)—son of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; husband of Ekaterina Iosifovna Grechko Berezhnaya; father of Nikolay Nikolayevich Berezhnoy and Vladimir Nikolayevich Berezhnoy (Wladimir N. Bereschnoy in Canada); brother of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); uncle of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Nikolay Nikolayevich Berezhnoy—son of Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy and Ekaterina Iosifovna Grechko Berezhnaya; brother of Vladimir Nikolayevich Berezhnoy (Wladimir Nikolayevich Bereschnoy in Canadian); nephew of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Nyusya—nickname of Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya; daughter of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; mother of Vitaly Berezhnoy (Talik); mother of Svetlana Nikolayevna Bereschnaya; sister of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); aunt of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro) (Russian nicknames: **Lyalya**, **Lyal'ka**, **Lyalyechka**, **Olya**, **Olyechka**, **Olyen'ka**); (Italian nickname **Lala**)—daughter of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky and Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); granddaughter of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Mikhail Makarovich Gladky; wife of Giulo Verro.

Olya, Olyechka, Olyen'ka—nicknames of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro); daughter of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky and Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky).

Orest Mikhailovich Gladky—son of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky and Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich; husband of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); father of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro); brother of Anna Mikhaylovna Gladkaya, Vera Mikhailovna Gladky, Igor Mikhailovich Gladky (Gladki); first cousin of Bonifaty Bonifatyevich Yuryevich;

Pavel Makarovich Gladky—son of Makar Gladky and Yelena Danilovna Gladky; brother of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky; uncle of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky.

Papa—name used for “father” in Russian.

Papochka, Papon’ka—endearing names for “father” (“papa”) in Russian.

Pyetr Gavriylovich Berezhnoy (nicknames: **Petya, Pyeten’ka, Petrushka**)—son of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; baby brother of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); uncle of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Pyetya, Pyeten’ka, Petrushka—nicknames of Pyetr Gavriylovich Berezhnoy—son of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; baby brother of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky) uncle of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Raisa Pavlovna Zagoroyko Berezhnaya (Bereschnoy in Canada); (nickname **Raya**)—wife of Vladimir Nikolayevich Berezhnoy (Wladimir Bereschnoy in Canada).

Raya—nickname of Raisa Pavlovna Zagoroyko Berezhnaya (Bereschnoy in Canada); wife of Vladimir Nikolayevich Berezhnoy (Wladimir Bereschnoy in Canada).

Rostik—nickname of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; son of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky and Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich Gladkaya; husband of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); father of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Sergey Kairov—classmate of Olga Gladkaya in Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union (1938–1939), and a young, promising poet.

Shura—nickname of Alexandr Gavriylovich Berezhnoy—son of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; brother of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky).

Styepan (nicknames: **Styepa, Styopka**)—tailor’s helper in Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy’s tailor shop.

Styepa, Styepka—nicknames of Styepan, tailor’s helper in Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy’s tailor shop.

Serafima Shyrman (nickname **Syma**)—girlfriend of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro) in Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk, Ukrainian SSR.

Syma—nickname of Serafima Shyrman—a girlfriend of Olga

Gladkaya (Gladky Verro) in Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk, Ukrainian SSR.

Talik—nickname of Vitaly Berezhnoy—son of Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya and Yan Ryapo (Commissar at Commissariate of People's Education in Kharkov, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union); grandson of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy; nephew of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Tanya—nickname of Tatyana Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Tatarskaya, daughter of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; wife of Solomon Moiseyevich Tatarsky; mother of Marianna Solomonovna Tatarskaya Naygovzina; sister of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); aunt of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Tatyana Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Tatarskaya—daughter of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; wife of Solomon Moiseyevich Tatarsky; mother of Marianna Solomonovna Tatarskaya Naygovzina; sister of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); aunt of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Tonya, Tonyechka, Tonik—nicknames of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); daughter of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; wife of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; mother of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Tosya—nickname of Antonina Yulyevna (Yuliusovna) Gauk Gladkaya (Gladki); wife of Igor Mikhailovich Gladky.

Valentina Alexandrovna Zakharova (nickname **Valya**)—girlfriend, classmate, and roommate of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro) in Moscow Power Institute.

Valya—nickname of Valentina Alexandrovna Zakharova—girlfriend, classmate, and roommate of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro) in Moscow Power Institute.

Vanya—nickname of Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy—son of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy and Natalia Iosifovna Grudzinskaya Berezhnaya; husband of Maria Fedorovna Dyeryughina Berezhnaya; father of Yelena Ivanovna Berezhnaya Mikailova; brother of Antonina Gavriylovna

Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); uncle of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Vera Mikhailovna Gladkaya Sokolovskaya—daughter of Mikhail Makarovich Gladky and Nadyezhda Vikentyevna Mikhnyevich Gladkaya; wife of Fyedor Sokolovsky; mother of Svetlana Fyedorovna Sokolovskaya; sister of Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; aunt of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Vitaly Yanovich Berezhnoy (nickname Talik)—son of Anna Gavriylovna Berezhnaya and Yan Ryapo (Commissar at Commissariate of People's Education in Kharkov, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union); grandson of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy; nephew of Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Vladimir Dobry nickname Vovka—classmate of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro) in Ten-Years-School No. 15 in in Slavyansk; school photographer.

Vladimir Nikolayevich Berezhnoy (Wladimir N. Bereschnoy in Canada) (nickname Volodya)—son of Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy and Ekaterina Iosifovna Grechko Berezhnaya; husband of Raisa Pavlovna Zagoroyko Berezhnaya (Bereschnoy); nephew of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Volodya—nickname of Vladimir Nikolayevich Berezhnoy—son of Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy and Ekaterina Iosifovna Grechko Berezhnaya; nephew of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Vovka—nickname of Vladimir Dobry—classmate of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro) in Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk; school photographer.

Wladimir Nikolayevich Bereschnoy (spelling in Canadian and German documents of Vladimir Nikolayevich Berezhnoy)—son of Nikolay Gavriylovich Berezhnoy and Ekaterina Iosifovna Grechko Berezhnaya; husband of Raisa Pavlovna Zagoroyko Berezhnaya; grandson of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy; nephew of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Yakov Voronov—best friend of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro) at Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet

Union.

Yasha—nickname of Yakov Voronov—best friend of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro) at Ten-Years-School No. 15 in Slavyansk, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union.

Yelena Ivanovna Berezhnaya Mikailova (nicknames **Lyalya, Lena**)—daughter of Ivan Gavriylovich Berezhnoy and Maria Fedorovna Dyeryughina Berezhnaya; granddaughter of Gavriyl Danilovich Berezhnoy; niece of Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladkaya (Gladky); first cousin of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro).

Yekaterina Fyedoravna Grudzinskaya—daughter of Fyedor Iosifovich Grudzinsky; first cousin of Antonina Griylovna Berezhnaya Gladky.

Zoya Litvinova—a daughter of Maria Sergyeyevna Sydorenko Litvinova who was Antonina's G. Gladkaya (Gladky) and her sister Tanya's girlfriend (from the old days when they all attended gymnasium, and she lived almost across the street from their father's home); a school friend of Olga Gladkaya (Gladky Verro.)

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Engaging Stories Told Through the Voices from the Past: A Collection of Short Stories Preserving Facts and Thoughts for Posterity to Pause and Ponder: Russia—Soviet Union: 1917–1971, by Orest M. Gladky; Editor Olga Gladky Verro; English Editor Oliver W. Kellogg. And its Russian version, **Golosa is proshlogo: Isbrannye rasskasy sokhranyayushchiye facty i mysli dlya poslyeduyushchikh pokoleny prochatat i podumat: Rossia—Sovyetsky Soyuz: 1917–1971**, by Orest Mikhailovich Gladky; Editor Olga Gladky Verro. (These books could be found on Orest M. Gladky Author Page on Amazon.)

Note: Look for the new upcoming English edition of this book with the new title: **Socialist Paradise** by Orest M. Gladky; Editor Olga Gladky Verro, English Editor Oliver W. Kellogg.

Books Published by Olga Gladky Verro, Author

In the Web of History: Old Russia and Soviet Union: With Unique Insight into Nikita Khrushchev's Politically Formative Years as a Communist Politician and a Rising Party Leader—Book One of *Historical Family Memoirs*. By Olga Gladky Verro. Edited by Oliver W. Kellogg.

Nikita Khrushchev's Teacher: Antonina G. Gladky Remembers: With Unique Insight into Nikita Khrushchev's Politically Formative Years as a Communist Politician and a Rising Party Leader—Abridged from *In the Web of History: Old Russia and Soviet Union—Book One of Historical Family Memoirs*.

Historical Family Memoirs Books

In the Web of History is an engaging odyssey of a family caught in whirlwind of catastrophic historical events and wars sweeping across the 20th century Russia and the Soviet Union. It brings to life the not-so-distant past—how history, people, and events influenced and shaped the family's fate.

It is a rich source for memoir readers who value an authentic voice of real people sharing their thoughts, aspirations, and struggles to overcome adversities in their lives.

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And there is a rare bonus for the curious readers, history buffs, and historians—the unique insight of Nikita Khrushchev's teacher into his politically formative years as a communist politician and a rising Party Leader.

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In **In the Web of History** readers are introduced to the beginning of a tumultuous odyssey of a family—one of millions of families—relentlessly hounded from place to place in their native Ukraine by the State watchdogs. That family is the Gladkys: Orest—pursued by Bolshevik state police as an “enemy of the people” owing to his age-16 Civil War service in the White Army; Antonina, his teacher wife, who had Nikita Khrushchev as a student; their engineering student daughter, Olga, who at the end of the family odyssey became an author memoirist.

Her saga-like *Historical Family Memoirs* are a rich resource for a

description of culture and life from the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries in Russia, particularly the Ukraine, and the Socialist Soviet Union, World War Two occupied Ukraine, Nazi labor and prisoners of war camps, and UNRRA and IRA camps in post-war Europe. The events, written and narrated as remembered by her mother and father, add an authentic voice to their stories that are personal in detail and historical in scope.

Historical Family Memoirs is a compelling narrative consistently fascinating, frequently riveting, that speaks with verifiable historical accuracy and evokes novel-like response in the reader. It is an odyssey of danger, fear, imprisonment and escape; of hatred and love; oppression and deliverance; starvation and savagery; separation and reunion; constancy and betrayal. But also, there is courage, tenderness, generosity and kindness—sometimes even of the enemy. Above all, *Historical Family Memoirs* is a record of enduring human spirit that, in the end, prevails against all odds.

—Oliver W. Kellogg, Editor and Publisher:
The Baudette (MN) Region—The Guttenberg (IA) Press.

Upcoming Sequel Books of *Historical Family Memoirs*

Note: Book titles are subject to editing before publishing.

The upcoming sequel, **In the Fury of War: Occupied Ukraine—Book Two of *Historical Family Memoirs***, narrates the Gladkys' family life under Nazi Germany occupation and the final tragedy before German retreat and desperate search by Antonina and Olga to save a husband and father from the Gestapo concentration camp. (Manuscript ready for publication.)

In the next upcoming sequel, **Italian Airman: Giulio Verro Remembers: With Unique Details of the Spanish Civil War and World War Two—Book Three of *Historical Family Memoirs***, Giulio narrates his story of growing up in an Italian working-class family and his years in the Italian Air Force in World War Two. The book has a bonus for the readers interested in World War Two and includes unique details of operations in the Spanish Civil War by volunteer legionnaires from the original "Book of Flight" of the Italian Air Squadron. It includes many photos from both wars. (Manuscript is ready for publication.)

The next upcoming sequel, **Chance, Destiny, or the Hand of God: Nazi Labor and Prisoners of War Camps—Book Four of *Historical Family Memoirs***, narrates the story of the family coping with life in the Nazi labor camps. At that time, an unexpected turn in the family odyssey occurred when an Italian airman and prisoner of war in Germany after Italy quit the war, their daughter Olga's sweetheart, Giulio Verro, suddenly becomes a major player in the Gladky family destiny. (Manuscript is ready for publication.)

The family odyssey continues in the next sequel, **In the Whirlwind of Refugees: Post World War Two Europe—Book Five of *Historical Family Memoirs***, as the father, mother, and daughter become World War Two Displaced Persons in occupied Germany and Poland. They face the advancing Soviets and forced deportation to gulags by the Soviet secret police and desperately try to save their lives. In the process they become separated from

each other in different countries liberated by the Allies. (Manuscript is ready for publication.)

The family odyssey continues in the sequel, **On the Immigrant's Road: Italy and England—Book Six of *Historical Family Memoirs***, which narrates a family divided and uncertain about their future. Olga with Giulio in Italy, Antonina, and Orest in England, trying to adjust to difficulties in life that each country has to overcome after the war. Although the family's desperate struggle for survival has been left behind, now Orest, Antonina and their daughter Olga endure a long separation while they seek to reunite in a country that would accept them all as World War Two refugees. (Manuscript is in the editing stage, mostly from the letters between Olga and her parents.)

The last sequel, **Free and Together: United States of America—Book Seven of *Historical Family Memoirs***, is in the planning stage.

—Olga Gladky Verro, Author Memoirist

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Olga Gladky Verro

In the Web of History

In the Web of History — Book One of *Historical Family Memoirs* is an engaging story of a family—one of millions of families—caught in the whirlwind of catastrophic historical events and wars sweeping across 20th-century Russia and the Soviet Union.

It is a treasure of an up-close family story intertwined with history as lived, documented, and remembered by the Gladky Family. The events, written and narrated, tell with authentic voice their life story that is personal in detail and historical in scope. It documents how the Russian Revolution, the Russian Civil War, the Bolsheviks' and Communist Party's totalitarian regime, and Stalin's bloody terror shaped their family fate.

The story begins in Old Russia with the peaceful life of ancestors and Antonina and Orest's happy childhood growing up in small provincial towns in southeastern Ukraine. The tragedy struck their families when they were just starting their independent life. But the course of their lives changed forever when Antonina married Orest, her former student and White Army veteran who returned home after fighting Reds in the last battles for Crimea. Their life became not only a struggle to survive the adversities imposed by the Soviet government on its people but also to prevent Orest, a White Army veteran, from being caught by the Soviet secret police. To evade his pursuers, they constantly moved from place to place in their native Ukraine.

—Oliver W. Kellogg, Editor and Publisher: The Baudette (MN) Region — The Giffenberg (IA) Press

In the Web of History Includes a Rare Bonus for Inquisitive Readers, History Buffs and Historians: Unique Insight into Nikita Khrushchev's Politically Formative Years as a Communist Politician and a Rising Party Leader.



Olga Gladky Verro, Author Memoirist, is a World War Two refugee from the Soviet Union via Nazi Occupied Ukraine (1941-1943) and labor camps in Germany (1943-1945). There she met her sweetheart, Giulio Verro, an Italian airman and a prisoner of war in Germany after Italy quit the war. He saved Olga from being forcefully deported to the Soviet gulag, as were all Soviet citizens found outside the Soviet Union's borders at the end of World War Two.

Olga Gladky Verro, Author Memoirist

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